WITH A PONY IN NORWAY

by Jeffery Harrison

The SHOOTING TIMES

and Country Magazine

Incorporating FIELD SPORTS

SEVENTY-FIFTH YEAR FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11th, 1957 1s. 3d. WEEKLY

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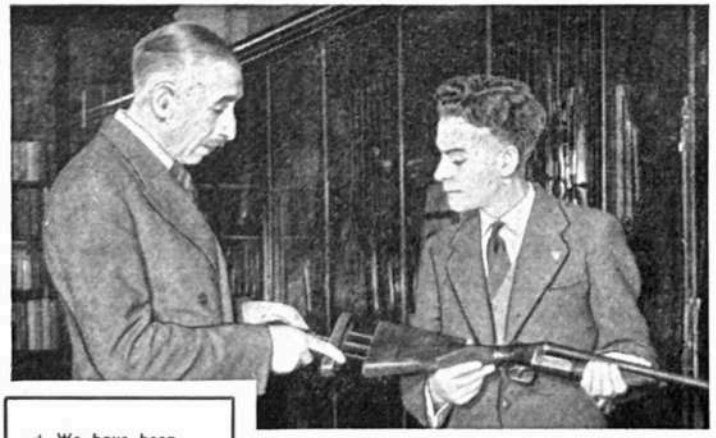

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"PATTERN? I never worry about it. Generally speaking, patterns are so good that I cannot shoot well enough to do them full justice." Thus or in so many words came the modest and somewhat surprising statement from Mr. Joe Wheater not half-an-hour after he had shattered the record of Mr. Crang and opinion of many onlookers at Bedford Gun Club. To those who have no visual experience of Mr. Wheater's prowess as a natural shot, or who are so bamboozled by ballistics that they cannot see the target for the technicalities which lie between the eye and the mark, such an announcement may smack of heresy, but the fact remains that if more people were to pay more attention to their own failings instead of blaming their guns and cartridges, they would miss a great deal fewer birds and would have far less cause to criticise than they do.

Nevertheless, far too few shooting men these days take the trouble to find out the capabilities of their weapon. Buying a second-hand gun "off the peg," they look first at the barrel interiors to check that these are clean and free from blemish, mount the gun to see how it handles and whether any stock adjustment is necessary, and that is that. In a hurry to put their new purchase to use, they often neglect to put it to the test first, so that when it or they or more likely a combination of both, fail to come up to expectations in the field, they are not sure why, but grumble unfairly and in ignorance.

In the case of a new gun this neglect may not matter so much, but over the years the bores of guns can alter with much use until their performance is not quite what it was. The wise man, therefore, will plate his gun at the shooting school to discover how it shoots and which loads suit it best and by asking his gunmaker he can, of course, always trace the history of a weapon.

On the other hand, there is many a ballistic "crank" who always knows more than the gunsmith, and for all his expertism (most of which is usually book or laboratory learnt) when the real, practical test comes, he is as much at a loss as the tyro. He will fiddle and fuss so much with different cartridges and loads that either he never knows where he is, or he finds that he is loading the wrong cartridge into his gun at the crucial moment. He has become so specialised, and knows so much about his gun that he dictates its limitations and he is the gunmaker's and the cartridge manufacturer's delight, for he is constantly on the change. He will be the first to tell you what is wrong with your gun regardless of the type of shooting for which it was made, or of the straightness of your aim. Follow his lead in your ignorance, and you will find yourself all the more bemused.

There are all sorts of guns and many different types of shooting men and shooting. But, speaking generally, all guns and all cartridges are better than the standard of shooting displayed by the majority of shots. The ballistic wrangle is always a source of interest and learning and no shooting man is "complete" without a working knowledge of basic ballistics. But more important perhaps, is the practical knowledge of how to hold straight, for once this is mastered, good shooting with any gun and cartridge follows.

THE SHOOTING TIMES AND COUNTRY MAGAZINE
Incorporating FIELD SPORTS
Official Organ of THE WILDFOWLERS' ASSOCIATION OF GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND

No. 3918 FRIDAY, OCTOBER 11, 1957 Founded 1882

The wild life of today is not ours to dispose of as we please. We have it in trust. We must account for it to those who come after.—King George VI.

NOTES AND COMMENTS

Rural Industries

The vitality and well-being of country life depend in the long run on the work available for country people to do. A hundred years ago villages could still count on their craftsmen's shops to make them self-sufficient and provide work for local people; in this way staple foods, clothing, boots and shoes, implements, vehicles and buildings could be produced on the spot.

Today most of these things are made in factories and workshops. a proportion of which are in country towns. Young men and women from the villages who wish to work elsewhere than on the farms are turning more and more to small firms in the market towns, to which they travel daily. In this way such firms are helping the economy of both town and village. Moreover, their products are no longer aimed at a local market, but often contribute to the export trade which is so vital to this country.

To help these firms and their workers there exists the Rural Industries Bureau which is entrusted by the Government to provide technical advice and assistance to country workshops. This is done by individual instruction, by courses at Farm Institutes and other centres, and by experimental work carried out at the Bureau's headquarters. The Bureau is concerned with improving and bringing up to date the techniques and business methods employed in rural industries, and in equipping them to face modern competitive conditions.

How successfully the Rural Industries Bureau is stimulating country crafts and the width of its scope are contained in its annual report, an interesting eighteen-pennyworth obtainable from 35 Camp Road, Wimbledon Common, S.W.19.

Purification Scheme on Cam

As a change from pollution, here is some good news. One of the first major post-war industrial purification plants on the River Cam was opened on October 3 by Edward Towgood and Sons Ltd., at their paper mills at Sawston. Effluent from the mill flows into a stream which serves the Cam several miles above Cambridge.

The new disposal plant is the fruit of four years of research and included the building of a pilot plant, 1/120th of the size of the final installation, which is believed to be the most up-to-date in the paper industry. At one stage of research, 10,000 samples were taken from the effluent flow every 24 hours for three months; a total of nearly a million separate samples.

The Company, which is a subsidiary of Spicers Ltd., Britain's largest firm of paper merchants, has been established at Sawston for nearly two hundred years, and it was found that with increasing production and growth in the variety of papers made the existing effluent plant was inadequate to deal with the problem. On one occasion in recent years, when coloured papers were being produced, the river ran bright red from Sawston to Cambridge and below.

The new plant has not only ensured the complete treatment of all fluid reaching the Cam, but has enabled the Company entirely to recover large quantities of paper fibre—their basic raw material—which was previously running to waste. Of this hitherto waste fibre, over 90 per cent is now returned directly to the paper making processes while the remainder is recovered, together with waste loading material.

A.C.A. News

Owing to an attack of foot and mouth disease at Saltford, the Bathampton Angling Association have had to postpone their A.C.A. Benefit Match which was to have been held on October 6. It is now hoped to hold the match on October 20.

The magnificent sum of £95 was raised at a Benefit Match held by the Alliance of Croydon and District Angling Clubs and a cheque for this amount was presented by the Chairman of of the Association, Mr. F. Veness, to the A.C.A. Chairman, Major General T. N. F. Wilson C.B., D.S.O., M.C., at the A.C.A. Council Meeting held in London on September 26.

B.F.S.S. Christmas Card

The British Field Sports Society's Christmas Card this year is a delightful two-colour illustration by "Snaffles" of "The Patient Fisherman."

The price of the cards is 10d. each or 10s. per dozen, including envelopes. Order forms, with a copy of the card, are available now from the Secretary, British Field Sports Society, 51 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Cover Picture

Our cover picture this week is a striking photograph of a grouse butt taken from an unusual angle. Someone may criticise the gun's bent left arm, but many shoot to expert effect in this manner. Pundits should have watched Mr. Joe Wheater's record shoot at Bedford. His left arm was well bent long before the end, but he still continued to kill his birds.

However, the emphasis of the photograph is on the position of the butt, not of the shooter.

AUCEPS.

MAGNUM OR GAME GUN?

by Tower-Bird

SOME years ago, I wrote on this page an article entitled "Twelve Words of Wisdom." Those twelve words were taken from a book on wildfowling, by Christopher Dalgety, one of our most knowledgeable and practical of fowlers. They were: THE WHOLE ART OF FOWLING CONSISTS OF GETTING THE FOWL WITHIN RANGE. The author went on to say that occasionally a really long shot comes off, which only tempts the shooter to try it again. If the fowler considers forty yards as the maximum range for shooting at geese and fifty yards for duck, he kills more and disturbs less. With an ordinary 2½in. 12-bore cartridge thirty yards is quite far enough for geese and forty yards for duck.

Here, then, is an answer to the young duck shooting correspondent who recently penned a letter to this journal asking whether he should use a game gun, or a magnum. He had apparently had a disagreement with his father over the matter.

Dalgety puts the additional range of the longer cartridge at ten yards; others might put it at nearer fifteen, if the barrel from which it is fired is a full choke. For myself, I would prefer Dalgety's dictum, for mentally to add excessive yardage to the range means also adding to the temptation of taking too-long shots.

Now, the question as to whether an enthusiastic young fowler should possess a magnum, or a game gun, just cannot be answered *click*—like that! Matters depend, surely, on a whole number of circumstances. That you can shoot a 2½in. case out of a gun with 3in. chambers is granted, and whether the pattern is likely to suffer at all I leave to the experts, being no ballistician. But if you do much rough shooting and enjoy days after pheasants, partridges, pigeon, snipe, rabbits, etc., the lighter game gun is the weapon for the occasion. On the other hand, as I shall presently show, there are times in the wildfowling season when a magnum is the tool for the job, and that ten extra yards can then make all the difference, to say nothing of the extra confidence engendered by the handling and firing of a heavier gun and heavier charge.

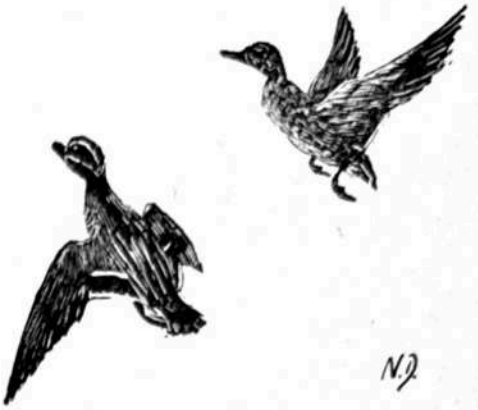
Our correspondent, being young, should decide to save up and own both kinds of gun, and he will not regret it. On the other hand, if nearly all his shooting is at coastal wildfowl, I think he might find a 3in. chambered gun (or even a 2¾in.) the better bet. But, should he decide along these lines, he should make it his golden rule not to be tempted by the more powerful weapon to take over-maximum-killing-range shots. And if he also prides himself as a fowler, he should always have at the back of his mind those twelve words of wisdom, for to most of us (I hope) the arts of the fowler are of greater importance than mere opportunity to fill the bag.

Kill or Miss

Again, what kind of fowling is our correspondent most likely to enjoy? Until my own ship comes home and I am able to buy a magnum, I shall continue to use my ordinary game gun, which is fully choked in only one barrel. And yet I spend all the fowling season shooting on the coast and on inland marshes to the extent that most people might envy. Circumstances provided me with a "best" gun, but I certainly wish (as the great majority of my shooting is at wildfowl) that it was fully choked in both barrels. It may be said, as it often is, that one must be a good shot to be able to kill consistently with a full choke, but I prefer to put it this way: a full choke usually means kill or miss, and that is how everyone should like his shooting to be.

Let me give some personal experiences to illustrate the rather sketchy advice I have offered. On certain inland marshes there has been a very good sprinkling of mallard about this year, though their numbers have been rather concentrated on those marshes which are best off for water. But since the opening of the shooting season the birds have been shot pretty heavily, especially on the stubbles, with the result that they are now as wild and wary as hawks. On two evenings I went out to flight without firing a shot, but seeing duck in the sky.

But this week-end (several pools of flood-water having appeared on one of my favourite marshes) I went out and brought back half-a-dozen mallard. I could have shot more. I lost two "runners." First of all I chose a spot on a suitable bank which was between one pool of flood-water and just within range of a favourite flighting line. I built a hide in the open by pressing in four stout willow sticks I had cut and draping two pieces of camouflage netting round them. The netting was just under shoulder-high, and the front portion of the hide



sloped inwards, leaving plenty of room for a man and his dog inside, and enough "sunshine roof" for him to get his head and shoulders out of the top and allow him all-round shooting. I put out half-a-dozen decoys about seventy yards away, realising that they could attract the attention of flying-round duck, while taking their attention off the hide. I was aware, of course, that the direction of the wind would cause any mallard thinking of dropping in to the decoys to swing wide and come within range.

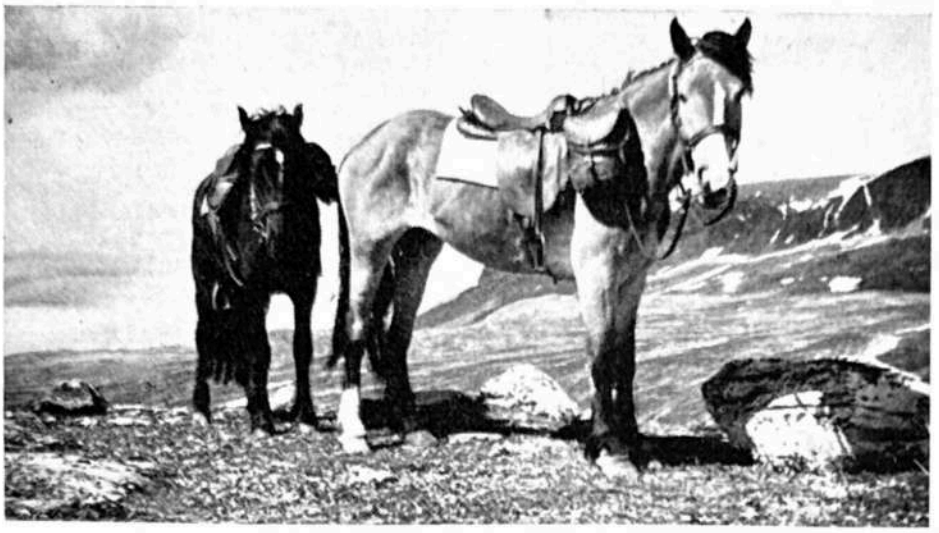
Tragedy of Lost Birds

To cut a long story short, I saw many duck pass over on the flight line which a magnum might have pulled down, but I was out for certain kills and good sport, and who can help but enjoy the result of his own artifice, whether it refers to hide-making, the proper setting out of decoys, or calling, etc.? On several occasions mallard (from a score to two's and three's, and even single birds) saw the decoys, took an immediate interest, came almost, or just in range, and then departed. The pool was small, and I think that most of them were merely inquisitive and had no intention of actually settling. I let at least three small parties go which offered a shot, for I thought they were going to come in a little closer, or even settle. That was what I meant when I said that I could have shot more.

The two lost birds were tragedies, as lost birds always are. The first came down winged a long way off in the fast-running, flooded river, and Don could not so much as find a trace of it, though he spent some time nosing up and down both banks. The second "runner" came down in the dusk far out on the far side of a wide stream and out beyond a large wing of flood-water. It no doubt escaped into one of the many deep, reedy runnels. I should not have lost it had Don seen it falling and run-in, but he was busy retrieving a bird elsewhere. So much for the game gun.

There are many occasions each year—on the coast and on the marshes inland where the wigeon muster all winter—when I would dearly love a magnum. There is one marsh in particular which might be described in flood as "an inland sea." Much-shot-at wigeon come into this marsh in long lines and unruly mobs, and by the hundreds, during the afternoon. Too often they flight over my head just out of range, to settle far out on the flood. They come in closer to decoys, it is true, but how much better could one do here with a magnum? And the same may be said at the tide's edge when duck are on the move.

However, if any young fowler cannot possess a magnum, let him be far from despairing. Let him get busy with close observation of the local habits of the birds; with decoys; with a boat. Often enough there are spots up the smaller estuaries into which freshwater springs run. Let him (for instance) anchor decoys as the tide goes out near the mouth of such a spring, then pull into the reeds and wait for the approach of the next making tide. He will get odd shots between times, for duck know these fresh water spots, and a game gun is good enough for anything here, as it is under a great many rather similar circumstances.



On the roof of Norway.

With a Pony in Norway

by Jeffery Harrison

BOOKS have been written by those who have ridden trips of 1,000 miles on horseback and having recently completed a mere 240 across the mountains of Norway, I feel at least entitled to write an article. That this was about all I could feel at the finish was purely incidental to a wonderful trip.

Our ride was planned in conjunction with the pony trekking which has recently been started in Norway by Hans Vedlund, whose ponies my wife and I were to ride. There are two kinds of Norwegian pony—the small and pretty dun-coloured Eastern type, the "dölahest," and a much more sturdy western type, or "fjordling," which has much in common with our Highland ponies, but is perhaps even stronger. These were what we rode, my own being a reserve horse for the Norwegian army and we were soon to see just how incredibly tough they were, particularly when fitted with special studded shoes to prevent them from slipping when climbing.

Briefly, our ride started at Al in central Norway and we were led by a trekking party eastwards to Ustaoset, high up on the side of the Hallingskarvet mountain range. The others then returned to Al, while my wife and I spent eight days exploring this magnificent country on our own, during which we covered a further 100 miles, before joining another trekking party to be led across the Hardanger mountain plateau to Maurseth where we finished.

Obviously we could only take on this trip what we could carry with us, which had to include a complete change of riding things, oil-skins, camera and ciné, field glasses, note-book, a taxidermy set, not to mention such things as maps, compass and even washing things. We looked quite a sight catching the "Norseman" at King's Cross, but we need never have worried for a Cambridge University "Pot-holing" expedition looked even worse and our only crack came from the Customs officer at Newcastle, who said he had not heard that we were sending a British riding team to Norway!

The Type of Country

Apart from the riding, we hoped to see as much as possible of the country and its birds and animals on our journey. In this we were certainly not to be disappointed, but this central mountainous part of Norway is so incredibly vast that it is necessary to search for days before seeing all that there is to be seen in any one place. For instance, the Hardanger Vidda is the largest, loneliest and wildest mountain area in northern Europe and on its plateau something like 30,000 reindeer are living. We rode for three days across the Vidda and never saw one. Such is Norway, a tough, rugged country, where one has to be fairly tough and rugged to get the best out of it. Speaking zoologically, it is divided into well-defined zones, based entirely on the differing vegetation at different heights. Low down beside the fjords and valleys is the Norway of the travel books, with the steep pine forests dropping precipitously down to the fjords, a land of waterfalls and boulder-strewn rivers, magnificent in every view. From 2-3,000 feet, the pines give way to silver birch trees and the mountains begin to flatten out. Here the ground is covered with heathers, bilberry and juniper. At approximately 3,000 feet the tree line is reached and above this is the flatter arctic-alpine plateau. Lichens and mosses replace the heather and such trees as there are become dwarf, creeping over the ground to escape the wind and the rigors of the climate.

From Al to Hol

Our start from Al lay well down in the pine zone, a lovely, little village of red and white wooden houses and a white wooden church, with pied flycatchers, fieldfares and hooded crows nesting commonly. The most exciting bird seen here was a magnificent hen goshawk, which dived into the valley, completely dwarfing a hoodie crow, which was following. Leaving Al, we had to climb out of the valley through miles of pine forest, which were somewhat disappointing—the only signs of capercaillie seen were the spread tails of five cocks nailed on to a hunter's hut for decoration and our hopes of eagle owls or even elks and bears, faded as we realised the extent of these seemingly endless forests. In fact we had to be content with siskins, red squirrels and a blue hare for a very long way.

We were bound for Hol via a devious route and not one of us knew anything about the way. One of our guides was Claus Helberg, one of the famous little party of Norwegian parachutists who blew up the heavy water plant at Vemork and whose epic adventures had prevented the Germans from making the atom bomb in the war. We were proud to have him for a guide and what better a guide—for anyone who could survive in these mountains in winter with the full force of the German Army of Occupation after him, must know and love the mountains and one could see that they were indeed a part of his life.

By lunch we had climbed through the birch zone and paused beside a small lake where a pair of grey-headed wagtails had their nest. These are like our own yellow wagtail, but have dark blue-grey heads without eye stripes and are only found in Scandinavia. On our ride, we only found them beside high mountain lakes. We next turned north through more birch and dwarf willow—and saw our first willow grouse—a wonderful sight as it jumped in front of the pony, calling like a grouse, with the tan brown body plumage of summer shining in the sun and startlingly white wings, which flashed away through the birches. Some ornithologists think this is only a geographical race of our grouse and that the two are not distinct species. The willow grouse goes completely white in winter and then is difficult to tell from the ptarmigan, except by the call and the black line extending from the beak to the eye, which is lacking in the ptarmigan.

Bogged Down

I was just watching a mallard drake on a lake 3,000 feet up when we nearly met with serious trouble, as a pony sank deeply into a bog and quickly became exhausted from its struggles. It was unsaddled immediately and four of us, aided to the best of its ability by the pony, eventually managed to drag it out, but it was a lesson we were glad to have learned before we set off on our own. There are many dangerous bogs on the flat arctic-alpine plateau over 3,000 feet up, which came as rather a shock to us and we gave them a wide berth for the rest of our journey.

We finished that day by coming down a most perilous and precipitous mountainside, back through the birch and then the pines to Hol, which lay 1,000 feet below us. We followed the dry course of a waterfall as it gave a clearing through the trees, the ponies feeling their way magnificently down the boulders, while for us it was a great exercise in balance, but there was always the risk of a loose boulder, and looking up from the bottom we decided we would rather not repeat that ride!

Hol is another picturesque wooden village with a famous 12th century stave church beside Holsfjord, on which we saw a mallard with nine young. Mallard have had a fine breeding season in Norway this year and we saw many such broods. Next day we set off on what was to prove a 33-mile ride, taking 11 hours, during which we climbed to 4,500 feet. We left Hol westwards along the valley, seeing

A lemming.

a mink running agilely over some boulders by the river. Captive minks have escaped in Norway and have spread rapidly and are now proving themselves a considerable menace, particularly to fish, which form their main diet.

We then faced yet another climb, this time of 1,500 feet through the pines and birch on to the foothills of the Hallingskarvet mountains, holding on to our ponies' manes to prevent ourselves from sliding backwards out of the saddles. I never thought horses were capable of such a climb, but by stopping for frequent rests, they took it in their stride. The birches were full of bramblings, the males now with their lovely blue-black heads and mantles of summer, wheezing like greenfinches. Finally we emerged rather breathless above the tree zone to find the peaks of the Hallingskarvet range towering beyond us, great crags of menacing black rock, much of them still being deeply snow-bound.

We rode along the arctic-alpine plateau below this, the ground a lovely mixture of greys, yellows and greens of the lichens and mosses and our ponies negotiating streams covered with snow with some difficulty, as they kept subsiding through the snow into the water beneath! Here we came upon the occasional dotterel and many of the handsome northern golden plovers, which watched us pass, whistling suspiciously from the tops of boulders, their jet black underparts sharply demarcated by a broad white line on each side, which almost met in front at the base of the neck. Here, too, were ravens and a pair of ring ousels in somewhat unusual surroundings.

We finally reached our destination, the tiny village of Ustaoset, at 22.30 that night, still, of course, in full daylight and in spite of the late hour we received quite a reception from the inhabitants and we learned later that we were the first people to come there on horseback since 1822 (or so they said), when a party called on their way to see Voringsvoss waterfall, which had just been discovered! However, we had no thoughts for this, but only to get our horses unsaddled and grazing before we staggered in for a meal. It had certainly been a day to remember and the view as we rode down the mountain out of the sunset was past description. The wild, black tops of the Hardanger Vidda streaked with great white patches of snow, stretched for 4,000 square miles beyond us over Ustavatn and the mighty ice-cap of the Hardanger glacier formed a white line on the horizon.

Speaking With Mouths Full

The others left us next day to return to Al, while Pam and I spent the next eight days exploring this wonderful country. Finding grazing for our ponies at such a height was obviously a problem and it was characteristic of the Norwegians that the farmer who let us have the use of one of his precious alpine meadows, would not hear of us paying anything for our two. Around the village we had families of twites, common sandpipers and the very dark, heavily spotted continental redshank, but the most exciting birds of all were the red-spotted bluethroats, which were common up here. They mean to this area what the robin means at home, the males with brilliant blue throats, edged in black and with a broad orange band across the breast. In the centre of the blue is a chestnut spot, hence its name. They were still singing their high pitched grating songs as they sailed down on open wings, slowly circling round with the sun shining through their wide-spread tails, showing off the characteristic chestnut base to perfection. We were lucky to find a nest with young and filmed both parents feeding them at a mere four feet's range. They have a plaintive *wheee* note, like a willow warbler, which we were amused to see they could utter with a beak full of small grubs, without any dropping out!

There are many lakes in this area and on them we saw various water birds. It is quite surprising to find common scoters floating peacefully here, 150 miles from the sea and over 3,000 feet up, looking as if they had never seen a wave in their lives, yet this is one of the places to which this toughest of sea duck comes to nest. Two white objects floating on another lake were so motionless that I thought they must be marker floats, but closer investigation revealed two scaup drakes. They took no notice of us and doubtless had wives nesting among the dwarf birch, but we failed to find them. Others seen included mallard, merganser, teal and wigeon—the latter reminding me of the story about the longeshoreman at home, who said there were "a lot of Norwegian duck about; some people calls 'em wigeon for short!"

We also saw a pair of greylags, which loomed out of low cloud over Ustavatn one rainy day, but I do not think they were nesting. By far the most handsome birds of these lakes were the black-throated divers, of which we saw two pairs and one single bird. They were comparatively tame and were not diving so much

A mink leaps ashore.

as they do in winter; in fact I was able to film one pair while they were busy feeding off the surface in a most un-diver like fashion, their superb french-grey heads making a splendid contrast with the deep blue of the lake.

Not all our days were so glorious and the weather in the mountains could change in a few minutes. On quite the foulest, we were rewarded by a pair of rough-legged buzzards, which we found on a mountain called Embretstöltj in pouring rain. One was gliding and hovering into the wind and gradually worked its way towards us so that we had a splendid view as it dropped on some quarry quite close to us. It was a typical buzzard, but with black markings on the lower breast and much white in the tail, with a black terminal band.

If only it had been a "lemming year" we would have seen many more. Lemmings are vole-like creatures with tiny tails, beautifully coloured with orange, black and cream markings, which live normally in the high moorland and which have cycles of abundance, which are closely followed by those animals which are dependent on them for food, notably the rough-legged buzzard, skuas and snowy owls. Last year was a "lemming year" unfortunately and although we tried hard to trap some for my brother's collection, we got none. We were a year too late and we heard of several pairs of snowy owls nesting on the Hardanger Vidda, seven young being ringed, but this year they would be far away in the Arctic. We heard too of lemmings being so numerous that they ate all the pasture for the Telemark cattle and had to swim the fjords to pastures new and climbed up the oars of boatmen as they were rowing.

The tinkling cow bells of the little chestnut and white Telemark cattle make a lovely background music to the mountains of Norway. They are not the best milkers, but being so small they can climb to the highest mountain pastures in summer, which no other cattle can reach. The Norwegian farmer sends his wife, children and the Telemark cattle up the mountain for the summer—quite an idea!

Exploding Ptarmigan

We saw rather few ptarmigan. According to the books, ptarmigan and willow grouse are best distinguished by their voices and differing habitats, but near Ustaoset we found a bog at the upper limit of the birch, where the two were to be seen on the same level, but probably the ptarmigan were a little lower than usual owing to the late-lying snow. It had snowed hard here on June 23—the coldest summer's day on record in Norway. Ptarmigan were quite tame and we usually found them on boulder-strewn mountainsides, where they just jumped in front of the ponies, which must have been used to such happenings for they never shied, whereas we used to get quite a shock at this sudden explosion of a black and white bird, which would fly a little way, uttering a loud sort of grunting croak, and we could feel our trigger fingers itching. Males far outnumbered females, which were probably still incubating, for we saw no young, in spite of assurances from the Norwegians, that they would have their "chickens" by then.

Another interesting bird we were lucky enough to find was the shore lark, which like the scoter was far from its haunts along the tide line, where I am familiar with it in winter. We were at the top of the really bleak peak of Eimeheii, just over 4,000 feet high and had hobbled our ponies and settled down for lunch, after seeing nothing except for a few wheatears and meadow pipits. In the middle of lunch a glorious male shore lark came and pitched on a great patch of snow and was immediately recognised by his two black "horns" silhouetted against the white of the snow and by the yellow chin and black facial markings. Then the female came along, running like a mouse, and settled on the nest not twelve yards off. We had indeed chosen a most fortunate place for lunch.

The last stage of our journey took us from Ustaoset across the Hardanger Vidda to Maurseth, via Kraekkja and Bjoreidalshytta, which are actually marked on large scale maps, but which are not, as we had imagined small villages. Each is a fine log cabin, run and staffed by the Norwegian tourist organisation, where hikers, climbers, fishermen or even horsemen can put up for the night. Here they can dry their clothes, have a wonderful four-course dinner and breakfast in the middle of nowhere and a bunk to sleep in.

We had been rejoined by Hans now, to guide us on our way. After the Hallingskarvet mountains, we were rather disappointed by the apparent desolation of the Hardanger plateau country. We added only one new bird to our list—a black-bellied dipper, which had flown overhead carrying food for its young. We saw plenty of northern golden plover, one or two dotterel and some more ptarmigan. Perhaps this was because the weather let us down for the entire three days that we spent riding across the plateau. We searched everywhere for the reindeer, but they feed always upwind and as the wind had been southerly for about a week, we were assured that they were all down in Telemark by now. In fact we heard from a

(Continued on page 814, col. 3)

Birds feeding near a road are liable to attract night poachers.

Round the Game Preserves

by David Imrie

THIS is once again the time when game may have to be watched by night as well as by day. Well-stocked pheasant coverts are particularly liable to attract the attentions of poachers, and good partridge ground is a close second. But in pre-myxomatosis times rabbits were probably the mainstay of the organised poaching gangs. They were easy to catch in long nets where they were really numerous, and they could be disposed of anywhere. On a much smaller scale hares were, and still are, netted by poachers at gateways in stone wall districts. Duck are also shot illicitly sometimes in moonlight during very hard weather where conditions are suitable. In fact, poachers will have a try for anything on the game preserve at night, if financial rewards appear to outweigh heavily the possible risks.

Needless to say, night watching is a duty which gamekeepers detest. Like most other people, they have enough to occupy them during the day; so this is extra work without extra remuneration. And it may be dangerous work, because night poachers are occasionally armed; but even if they are not armed, they are apt to be desperate; for night poaching is punishable with sever penalties, which may include a stiff prison sentence.

On estates where game was preserved intensively this ever-present threat of night poaching was so well recognised by the management that men were either engaged specially to combat this nuisance or they were recruited temporarily from some other department. At one time we had two labourers on night work; and although this patrolling of the coverts in the dark was mainly designed to repel foxes, it was also a precaution against poaching, because it carried on in calm as well as in stormy weather, whereas fox scaring is mainly a job for wild nights.

Evidence of Poaching

As far as keepers themselves are concerned however, night watching is generally a sporadic business. They may, if they are anxious types, take a turn round in the wee, sma' hours just to put their minds at rest, or they may act on something definite, such as a shot, and only desist for a time when they have brought some malefactor to book, if he has not been scared by knowledge of imminent danger to himself meanwhile.

But a shot at night is only one of the signs to an alert keeper all is not well on the game preserve. Feathers in a field where partridges have been netted; pegs lost by long netters; holes made by net pegs; unfastened gates; small-bore cartridges lying on the roadway; and strange footprints in muddy places are all eloquent. Incidentally, on one Scottish estate where I was employed a certain sign of poaching activities was the mark of a goloshed foot. It signified invariably that a Dundee gang had been among partridges or rabbits.

Further Evidence

In addition to these clues, the keeper may detect something while the poachers are actually on the move. He may meet them on the roadway, coming or going. He may hear pheasants, or pigeon, flying in fright from their roosts; he may flush pheasants from places where they do not normally juk ; he may hear a horse stampede; he may hear the cracking of sticks; he may hear a fence creak; he may hear a car or motor cycle start up in some unlikely spot; and he may find a flock of sheep standing altert in a bunch.

There are also people who are willing to tell the keeper of strange movements and happenings. A villager, for instance, may let him know that one of his neighbours goes out at all times of the night, and always returns before dawn; or that a gamedealer's van visits him periodically. If such definite evidence is not available, the villager may mention to the keeper that his neighbour holds a full game licence, although he has not an acre of legitimate sporting ground. These items have been passed on to me quietly; and the man who warned me of his neighbour's midnight wanderings added that he had seen him go out into the moonlit street with his boots under his armpits. Obviously a chap does not go out in his stockinged feet for a casual stroll !

One bit of information of this kind which did not result in a prosecution, but which gave the keeper a warning of the person's character, concerned a youth who shot a pheasant from a tree near his home after he had been to a dance. The keeper heard the midnight shot, and was told that this fellow must have passed under the tree a few minutes previously; so it was a case of putting two and two together. There was no doubt whatever that the shot had been fired there, because pellet marks were visible on the branches. Years later the youth himself confirmed this suspicion.

But odd, petty poaching incidents do not worry the keeper unduly. It is the wholesale racketeering which he fears most. Pillaging of that sort can damage his reputation seriously, and may end in his dismissal. Unfortunately, the racketeers are apt to be persistent and brazen, and are only held in check with the greatest difficulty. Here is one good instance.

On a Moonlit Night

One moonlight night many years ago I walked into the nearest town to do some business. There were no thoughts of poachers in my mind as I wandered along the quiet road, although I had a fair number of pheasants in a mixed covert beside it. On my way back I put up a couple of pheasants from the verge opposite this covert. At once I became alert. I stood for several minutes, and heard a dozen pigeon flutter from the conifer trees nearby. This was unmistakeable. I carefully picked my way into the covert, expecting to contact the poachers there and then; but they must have seen me. Although I stood stock still until I was nearly frozen, they did not move. Nevertheless they were in the covert. Some time later my movements, to my astonishment, were accurately described to me by a beater, who had got the story from the poachers. Apparently they had seen me in the town, noted that I was on foot, and made up their minds without delay to take the fullest advantage of this opening. It was lucky for myself that I was at least able to foil the nefarious scheme.

This habit of lying low in the coverts at night is characteristic of experienced poachers. The greenhorns are more apt to make a dash for safety at the first hint of trouble, and are therefore more easily caught. It has been my bad luck to be annoyed often by the craftier type of poacher, who would lie low for perhaps as much as eight hours on a freezing night just to get an odd shot at a bird before dawn, if he felt certain that I had given up the hunt. It is really difficult to convince oneself that anyone could be so persistent, but facts are facts. The only effective antidote for the nuisance of this kind is a savage dog with a good nose.

Some time during the 1930s I read of one poacher who had evolved even a better technique than this lying low business, which is, after all, a cold, weary job and a waste of time. This man, of rather better education than the normal poacher, had, in addition to the shotgun for potting pheasants, a pistol which fired tear gas. This pistol was designed to render an inquisitive keeper temporarily *hors de combat*. Whether it was ever actually used for that purpose I cannot remember; but it did not save him from a prosecution.

Apparently there is no substitute for night watching where large numbers of game are produced. Some keepers put an alarm gun on every ride in their coverts, and hope that this will scare away their midnight enemies. Vain hope ! These devices will certainly make the poachers more cautious, but they will not repel them permanently, if they are of the right breed. I should say, however, that night poaching is encouraged more than it need be, if hundreds and hundreds of hand-reared pheasants are fed daily within sight of a busy highway. People talk about this unusual spectacle, and sooner or later the news gets to the proper quarter. When this happens, the keeper may notice strangers watching his seething mass of feeding birds some evening. Then he can look out for trouble in a big way. These strangers, probably of the thug type have had their cupidity aroused, and they will assuredly organised a raid.

The Young Shot

Rough Stuff

by Petrel

HOW dense are your partridges? The question is, of course, numerical, not psychological. In plain language, how many have you got? Unless your principal interest is partridges the chances are that the idiom of modern partridge farming is foreign to you. Such terms as density, hatchability, age/sex ratios and the like will not figure largely in your vocabulary. It is to be hoped that you will take a nonetheless intelligent interest in these matters and can tell and will notice, for instance, young birds from old and cocks from hens, but many of the mysteries of science and its jargon may escape you.

Your reaction will most likely be more simply phrased. Either you have a heck of a lot of birds, or stocks are middling or something poor. And on the small rough shoot, although actual numbers may seem to bear only ridiculous relation to quantities on larger estates, they are viewed with no less satisfaction or disappointment.

It gives me great pleasure, therefore, to record that the density of partridges on Petrel's purlieus is greater now than at any other time during the past five seasons.

But before any statistician starts wondering whether his abacus holds enough beads, let me explain the position further in its proper perspective.

Healthy State of Affairs

My door-step partridge shoot—or rather shooting, for here surely is a case when the latter noun, recently the subject of discussion in the correspondence columns, applies—comprises just over 20 acres! This plot of ground at present supports 42 partridges. Until last Saturday when a friend, keen to try out a new gun, depleted a covey of ten Frenchmen by a single bird, the total stood at 43. Five coveys conspire to make up this number, being composed as follows: 5, 4, 11, 13 and now 9. Work this out in birds per acre and young/old ratio, presuming always that a pair of old birds is the origin of a covey, and I think you will agree that this is a pretty healthy state of affairs. If it comes as a shock to you that we are dealing with such small numbers, rest assured that this is nothing to the shock experienced by the two guns to whom I had promised to show at least five birds on this tiny acreage. And I would not be honest if I did not admit to my own astonishment at the showing for inspection of the ground two days earlier had only given hope of a quarter the number of birds.

The reasons for this happy, if miniature state of affairs are not hard to find. In the first place they are due to improved farming. When first I knew this smallholding, it was a mess of weeds and grassland gone to seed. Nothing organic or inorganic was added to the soil, and these acid pastures which once were the site of a fir forest were fast reverting to a barren waste. Then from the peaty wilds of Ireland came a farmer's widow who had fought a similar battle before, and she began to put the land in hand. The pastures were limed and reseeded, kale and corn are grown in small but sufficient quantities where no crops grew before, and the result has been that the nucleus of partridges which survived inefficient farming with its consequent lack of cover and food has discovered a new lease of life on the rejuvenated land.

Outside Help

To the best of my knowledge, and I have searched long and diligently for nests over the last three seasons, no birds have bred on the ground. For nesting sites they seek the sanctuary of the "pool dump" that borders the twenty acres on two sides, a scrubby, wired enclosure on the high, dry ground wherein no man may set foot save employees of a mighty oil combine, and on whose perimeter fences large white notice boards bear the warning; No Smoking; No Naked Lights; Dangerous Dogs; No Admittance; dire announcements, stern enough to repel the most intrepid poacher.

This territory behind the wire is at once a help and a hindrance. True it preserves the birds from human disturbance, but at the same time it is a barrier to vermin destruction, and winged vermin can easily surmount a barrier impassible to humans. In past seasons this has made it hard for partridges to hatch and rear a brood, but a welcome sign of the times is the interest in game preservation taken by those whose lands border these boundaries. Ground which once offered safe nesting sanctuary to crows and magpies has now become too hot to hold them, with the consequence that birds nesting and resting behind the wire are that much the safer. Here then is a perfect, if small example of the benefits to the partridge of better farming allied to the conscientious destruction of predators.

Ten miles away on another piece of ground over which I hold sporting sway, it is a very different story. The low-lying land has been let go, as have the fields over the boundary, with the result that the six pairs of birds that I counted with excitement in the early spring have had little chance. The chicks that survived the next-door magpies had scant food on which to grow fat and strong, and although the partridge is undeniably fond of weed seeds, it needs more than these on sour land bereft of corn to make a showing. Pheasants seem to manage, as apparently pheasants always will, in the boggy bottoms, but partridges forsake this ground for richer pastures as soon as they find them.

Not So Easy

Planning a shoot on small pieces of ground is almost as difficult as organising on a grander scale. In fact it often causes more headaches, for in many cases, once the birds are flushed, it will not be many wing beats before they are over the boundary. In some respects, however, the difficulties prove an advantage, for they call for careful thought and observation if they are to be surmounted and I always get more of a kick out of a day's shooting that requires a little scheming and low cunning than plodding with no definite purpose round broader acres. More important, perhaps, for best results in such small circumstances birds will have to be driven, which makes not only for better shooting, and probably more in the bag, but also for less chances lost or pricked by despairing long shots.

With all modesty, I doubt if anyone could have wished for better driven shots than those offered by the 32 partridges that sped out high over the pipeline fence, straight above the head of the waiting gun on this occasion. If only his tie had not caught under his top-lever in some mysterious fashion at the crucial moment! The secret of this concentration of coveys was undoubtedly the feed hopper placed in the dead ground which also ensured that guns and beater were able to take up their positions unobserved. A little thought and observation of the flight lines can provide on a place as small as this at least three quarters of an hour's sport for as many as four guns.

The first four birds left the dead ground and broke out on the flank.

Forthcoming Field Trials

Oct. 11 & 12: Labrador Club of Scotland (Novice and All-Aged Stakes). Cromlix, Dunblane, Perthshire. Secretary: J. W. Manson, Glengour House, Ferryhills, Inverkeithing, Fife.

Oct. 11 & 12: North Western Counties Field Trial Association (Spaniels). Secretary: A. Mason, 21 King Street, Carnforth, Lancs.

Oct. 12: Utility Gundog Society (Eastern Counties Branch). Gorhambury, St. Albans. Secretary: Miss D. Morland-Hooper, 3 Eastfield Road, Royston, Herts.

Oct. 12: Essex Field Trial Society (Retrievers) (Non-Winners Stake). Secretary: A. R. Heasman, St. Aubyns, Saffron Walden, Essex.

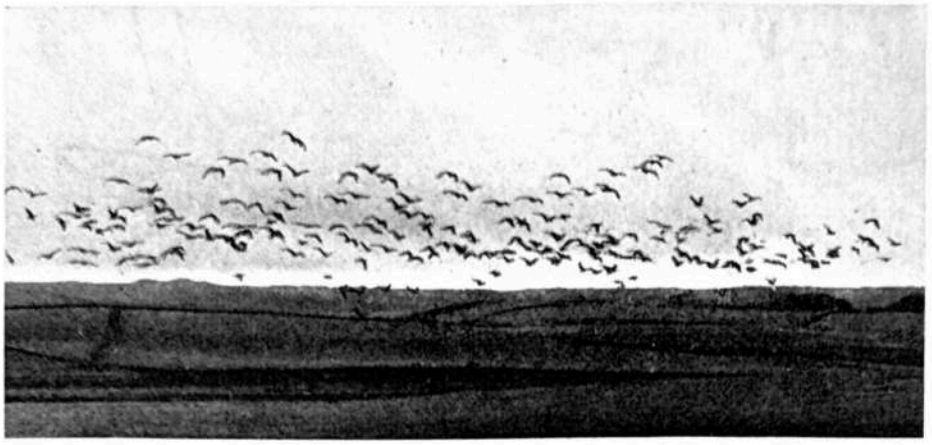
Oct. 14 & 15: Midland Counties Labrador Retriever Club (Open Stake). Bibery and Charlton Abbots, near Andover. Secretary: Mrs. J. Taylor, Chase Cliffe, Whatstandwell, near Matlock.

Oct. 18: Gamekeepers Flat-Coat Retriever Club. Brandon Park, Brandon, Suffolk. Secretary: C. F. Williams, 40 Wood End Way, Northolt Park, near Greenford, Middlesex.

Oct. 14 & 15: Scottish Field Trials Association ('Retrievers). Cromlix, Dunblane, Perthshire. Judges: Major H. Peacock, Mrs. M. McPherson and Brig. A. Gilroy. Secretary: Lt.-Col. R. Lawder, Brownmoor House, Ecclefechan, Lockerbie, Dumfries.

Oct. 15: Essex Field Trial Society (Retrievers) (Puppy and Non-Winners Stake). Secretary: A. R. Heasman, St. Aubyns, Saffron Walden, Essex.

Oct. 15 & 16: English Springer Spaniel Club of Scotland. Secretary: Mrs. E. K. Thomson, Over Linkins, Castle Douglas, Scotland.



Far out of shot, but wonderful to see and to hear.

THE PROFESSIONAL

by Bill Powell

HAPPY the lot of the professional wildfowler! To him all kinds and descriptions of weather are "good." Come hail, gale, and wintry blast—these are conditions beloved of the fowler. Come flat calm and sultry shirt-sleeve weather—well, it is very pleasant to be out on a marsh in such conditions, and maybe it will blow next week, or if not, the week after!

During every wildfowling season there is always one or more weeks when conditions are ideal and bags above the average. The professional who is out dawn and dusk the season through can indeed afford to adopt a philosophical attitude towards a week of "butterfly" weather, but can at the same time appreciate the chagrin of his charges who may have waited with increasingly feverish anticipation of just this one week for fifty-one long weeks, and who may have to await a further fifty-one weeks to pass before setting foot on the marshes again.

Dawn broke upon one October morning with the type of weather more associated with May. No cloud was to be seen in the onyx sky. No breath of wind caused ripples on the mirror pools. No bird or beast stirred, and all was peace and silence.

What a wondrous thing is silence, and how rare! To many it would seem that silence is something indelicate—almost improper. When a radio programme finishes ahead of schedule, or a test match is rained off, the announcer turns on jazz music or a brass band to compensate his eager listeners. Should the interval be of brief duration the gap is breached by a peal of bells. Anything, so long that there is *NOISE*!

What They Miss

The silence of this October morning was broken by the sound of a distant train which grew in a crescendo of sound as it approached. It was the sleepingcar train which had been roaring up from London throughout the night with its load of recumbent business tycoons, snatching a few hours of restless slumber before resuming their ceaseless chase after money and yet more money with which to buy, equip and maintain palaces in which they have no time or leisure to live. They little know what they miss as they rush by this earthly paradise with blinds drawn in their steam-heated cubicles, leaving a trail of smoke across the windless sky. I pity them, and doubtless if they knew of my existence at all they might spare me a fleeting thought of pity for having to earn my living in the wet and cold and mud.

The noise recedes, and all is silence once more save for the plaintive wail of a curlew as it makes its leisurely way inland. Then from the sky comes a drone which grows to a roar as a multi-engined sky-liner appears high above, with red and green lights aflash as it speeds on its way. More tycoons, maybe, London bound, in search of dollars and yet more dollars. High speed travel is expensive, and to pay for it more and speedier travel must be done to save time for still more work in order to earn the money to pay for the speed. And so the vicious circle goes on.

Thirty or forty years ago that ocean greyhound the Mauretania, elder sister of the ill-fated Lusitania, crossed the Atlantic in from four to five days, and all thought this a miracle of speedy travel. Today the crossing can be made in almost as many hours, but it is doubtful if the world is the more agreeable because of it.

Time How Spent

A Chinese proverb asks: "What do you do with time when you've saved it?" There is food for reflection in this thought. As often as not the answer is that the time saved is used for work to earn the extra that time-saving has cost.

Poor tycoon! He need not look out with pity for the poor wildfowler, as he speeds northwards in his sleeping car. He has not the time for wildfowling. The only shooting parties he ever attends are on the moors, when he is photographed surrounded by fellow tycoons and their ladies, with lavish luncheon baskets and a profusion of champagne bottles laid out, and with respectful keepers and pannier-laden ponies in the background. Wildfowling parties are seldom featured in *The Tatler*.

The sky has by now turned a deep crimson—a shepherd's warning of bad weather to come. Five mallard fly out to the flats at great speed and great height—too high for the waiting guns to attempt a shot.

Who are these waiting guns? What is the "type" to whom wildfowling appeals? There is the foxhunting squire to whom any sport in the open air is as the breath of life, and his son, a subaltern in the Brigade of Guards. (I just like to see 'm myself," said father on arrival, "but my boy is mad keen to get a goose"). There is the Cornish farmer who spends fifty weeks a year on his farm, and the remaining two on the marshes in pursuit of geese; there are two young motor mechanics from an industrial town in the Midlands; a farmer's son having his first initiation into wildfowling; an elderly bank clerk; a tea planter home on leave from Ceylon; a high-ranking Air Force officer; a clergyman.

So you see there is no "wildfowling type." That old boy sitting opposite you in the train may be a life-long wildfowler in his spare time, and maybe the office boy where you work is "mad keen to get a goose."

The professional glanced at his watch. The geese are late in flying this morning. It needs cold weather to put an edge on their appetite. They are also late in arriving from overseas this year. No doubt inclement weather has delayed their migration—Ah. Here they come!

A skein of nearly a hundred pinkfeet rose far out on the flats and flew overhead inland, far too high to shoot but wonderful to see and hear. Three smaller skeins followed at intervals, and then silence once more returned to the marshes.

Morning flight is over, and not a shot has been fired. A wasted morning? NOT ON YOUR LIFE!

Gun Gossip

by North Country

A READER in the Worthing district asks me whether he should buy a 2¾in. or a 3in. 12-bore for duck shooting. In the absence of any further details or information on the circumstances of the duck shooting or any other shooting for which the gun may be used, I would suggest a gun chambered for the 2¾in. case. This indeed means a very nice and handy weight of gun for duck and rough shooting of the wilder kind where birds may need to be taken at rather longer ranges than those at which game birds are usually shot. And when it is considered that a 2¾in. gun can be made up to weigh 7¼lb. or even less, I feel it should not impose any too much burden upon a normally fit and active man. This means that the standard charge to be used will be 1¼oz. of shot. Which adds just that little extra to the full 2¾in. charge that can make the difference between a kill and a non-kill. Many guns, too, seem to make such good and regular patterns with this charge, which was the former pigeon charge. I may be wrong, but I rather feel that more guns handle the 1¼oz. charge with high efficiency than they do the 1½oz. charge of the 3in. cartridge. This latter load is a very good one when it is well handled. But I fancy that some guns do not make the most of it.

It is a mistake to be over-gunned. I believe that many people would do better (or, any way, just as well) were they armed with lighter weapons handling a little less shot. I refer to duck and wildfowl shooting. And I say this in spite of the fact that I possess a very good 3in. gun myself. At its best and properly handled this kind of weapon is as good and as powerful as anything which the shoulder gunner wants. But it is more of a specialist gun than the 2¾in. And this latter is, I should say, the most suitable weapon for the purposes of my correspondent.

There is the question of cartridges. The 2¾in. cartridge is usually in fair distribution and, I should say, would be more readily obtainable than the 3in. While you can always make do with the 2¾in., it is an advantage to be able to procure locally the actual cartridge for which the gun is chambered. A friend of mine who spends much of his time after geese always uses a 2¾in. gun.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Letters and photographs are invited for this page. They should be as brief as possible, and the names and addresses of senders must be given, though these need not necessarily be published. Correspondence should be addressed to The Editor, The Shooting Times & Country Magazine, 29 Old Bond Street, London, W.1. 'Phone: HYDe Park 2556/2557.

AMERICAN STRAYS

Sir,—Apropos the pectoral sandpiper referred to in my article in the issue for September 27, readers may be interested to learn that three were seen in Clay marshes during September.

Two were identified by expert birdwatchers as "Americans." The third was much shyer than the others, flew with extraordinary rapidity, had a slightly different note, and was thought to be a "Siberian"—though no one got near enough to be able to make a good record of it.

SEA-PIE,
Norfolk.

EXTREME VIEW

Sir,—At an inquest at Walsall (Staffs) recently a police ballistics expert gave evidence and described in detail a most unfortunate accident where a man had been shot. He explained to the court how the accident had been caused by "a million to one chance." The Coroner's jury gave a recommendation that *the use of .22 sporting rifles should be prohibited except on ranges.* This recommendation, after an expert had described the accident as "a million to one chance." must have caused shooting men, both target and sporting enthusiasts, considerable alarm.

There are signs that the police hold the same extreme views as the jury mentioned above because it is noticeable how difficult they make things for shooters. Recently a new member of my club came to the range with a semi-automatic sporting rifle: the police had granted him a licence to use this rifle "on approved ranges only." They let him purchase the rifle knowing that it would be very unlikely that they will ever permit him to use it for sporting purposes.

Target shooters welcome new members, but cannot offer the form of shooting for which sporting rifles are designed. It may be that a new form of competition is needed for our sporting friends and I suggest that target shooters should consider what could be done in this respect.

It would appear that sporting shooters need an organising body to guide them through a difficult period when facilities are fast disappearing.

The outcome of all this is a serious problem for shooters generally which can only be overcome by co-operation between target shooters and sporting shooters in the fight for a fair deal from the police.

I would like to hear other readers' views on this very serious problem.

A. S. GREAVES-LORD,
Sutton Coldfield, Warks.

FALLOW DEER IN THE HAY-FIELD

Sir,—Not long ago, I saw a fallow deer fawn (female) which had been rescued from being killed by the mower's knife in an Essex hay-field. The little fawn, only a few days old, had been left in the long grass by its mother and was spotted by the tractor driver just in time.

Saved from the cutter. (See letter, "Fallow Deer in the Hay-field.")

The farmer took care of the fawn which was quite fearless and later was successful in getting a Kerry ewe (who had her lambs this spring) to suckle and mother her new found child.

The fawn is making fine progress with her foster-mother and has happily adapted itself to the new environment.

P.J.,
London, S.W.1.

[Spotted by the tractor driver?—Ed.]

WILDFOWLING DOGS

Sir,—I think some of your correspondents are confusing duck shooting with wildfowling. There is a world of difference. I emphatically believe that colour is very important and that a dog trained to run in to the fall is a decided advantage to a wildfowler. I did not suddenly arrive at these conclusions and no amount of letters will make me change my mind.

I was instructed from childhood by a gamekeeper grandfather who believed that the only dog for retrieving was a black labrador and it must not move until commanded. From him I inherited a love for black labradors (which are still my favourites) and the lessons instilled into me on dog training will never be forgotten. Wildfowling played no part in his life.

When I left my beloved fellside home, and came to live on the north east coast, I decided to train myself a dog. Naturally that dog was black, and naturally I trained it exactly as I had been taught. Where I do all my fowling is totally devoid of any cover—just acres and acres of mud and lesson No. 1 was soon learned. A black labrador was too obvious to sharp-eyed duck. After lying in a shallow "grave" for some time, it was frustrating to have the duck sheer off while still out of gunshot, simply because the dog had poked his head out from under the sack used to cover him.

Lesson No. 2 was not so easily learned. I had lost a fair number of duck by keeping the hound back because duck were in the air following my shot and then finding that the duck down had escaped via a "runner" (small stream) into deep water and was now too far away to retrieve.

Before I had put theory into practice, war intervened and all my plans had to be shelved. When peace returned I decided to obtain and train a dog specially for wildfowling. Bearing in mind the type of dog used by the decoymen of bygone days I eventually obtained what I had been looking for, a dark-coloured yellow labrador bitch. Mr. Moxon calls this colour "light chocolate."

In training to run in to fall, I was breaking what to me, was new ground and had difficulty in getting the bitch to run in to fall and not shot. Before the end of the first season, however, she had got it straightened out and would not move unless a bird was obviously hit. She is now in her seventh working season and very, very few birds escape her.

She only runs to the fall of birds to which she was trained to run in and has been and still is used at partridge, hare and pigeon shoots where she only retrieves when commanded.

To anyone contemplating the purchase of a dog to be used mainly for wildfowling I unhesitatingly say obtain a foxy coloured labrador and definitely train to run in to fall.

A. ALLINSON-CURRAH,
Alnsmouth, Alnwick.

Sir,—Captain C. A. Pryor seems to doubt the truthfulness of my letter published in *The Shooting Times* in August. I said seventeen birds were down, and I repeat that it was that number. Three of us were shooting on that particular evening, the two sportsmen who were with me were first-class shots and true wildfowlers. I can assure Capt. Pryor that there are to be found in and around Swansea—good sportsmen who are also truthful.

No form of "air burst" was used; we each shot with a double barrel gun. Should the Captain still be doubtful, I can give him full particulars.

Captain Pryor can allow his dog to

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run in to the fall; he is free to do as he pleases. There are numbers of good, unsteady dogs about, I have seen plenty. But I maintain that these same dogs would be better ones if under proper control.

Now let me clear up a most important point ament the run in to the fall. The runner in goes out to all falls (he has been trained to do so), but when any man tells me that he can stop him by voice or whistle, that dog becomes or *is* a well-trained dog. He, the dog, is certainly not a runner in. We must be fair to our dogs, and it is utterly wrong to cause them undue puzzlement.

T. L. JONES,
Wales.

EARLY GEESE

Sir,—I wonder if readers could tell me if they have ever known wild geese to be about 25 miles from the coast as early in the year as this. I was working in the fields on September 25 when I saw a skein of eleven.

I have seen geese in this district as early as the middle of October, but never in September. They were pink-footed. I have shot them in this district, but we do not get them here until the very sharp weather. I am a regular reader of 15 years' standing and also belong to the Wisbech Wildfowling Club as I am a great believer in upholding our sport.

Regarding game prospects round this district, they are exceptionally good.

LESLIE HARRIS,
Eye, Nr. Peterborough.

FOWLING CLUBS IN WALES —A MEETING

Sir, — Lt.-Commander Anderton's appeal to fowlers in Scotland, has prompted this Council to make a similar appeal to fowlers in Wales.

The virtual total ban on Sunday shooting throughout the Principality of Wales would never have arisen, had fowlers been organised, in any way whatsoever. The recent public inquiry into Sunday shooting in Flintshire, with its subsequent verdict favourable to fowlers, has shown however, just how much can be done.

It is quite certain that further inroads on the rights of shooting men will be made in the near future, and, unless fowlers are prepared, then irrevocably the anti-blood sport element will once again win the day.

The genuine ornithologist always welcomes the co-operation of the clear-thinking sportsman, and it is hoped therefore that not only wildfowlers, but ornithologists, and, generally all those interested, will attend a meeting at the Mael Gwyn Hotel, Llandudno Junction, at 8 p.m. on Tuesday, October 22, to discuss the possibility of forming more wildfowlers associations in Wales.

Further details and offers of help, will be more than welcomed then by W.A.G.B.I.'s hon. secretary, Lt.-Commander Anderton, 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2; Mr. J. Swinne, Mael Gwyn Hotel, Llandudno Junction; Mr. P. Smith, Ael y Bryn, Deganwy Road, Deganwy; or the writer.

J. B. BROUGH
(Hon. Sec., The Joint Council of Cheshire Wildfowlers' Clubs), 48 Greenleas Road, Wallasey, Cheshire.

BALLISTICS

Sir,—Mr. Braden's ballistics are all at sea when he claims that "the further away the game is, the *wider* must be the pattern to compensate for aiming error" (issue September 27).

It is a popular fallacy that a gun is *deliberately* designed to give a spread of shot to make shooting easy. Almost the exact contrary is true, for gunmakers have been trying for generations, without much success, to make a barrel that will give *close* patterns at long ranges. Choke boring was only a partial solution, as this closes up the pattern at short and medium ranges, but is ineffective at very long ranges. Mr. Braden can widen his pattern for all ranges by sawing a couple of feet off his barrels. This will compensate for mighty errors of aiming, but will do little more than make him liable to apply for a Firearms Certificate.

Your old gun editor, the late Henry Sharpe, proved for all time that successful shooting depends on the skill of the shooter rather than his armoury. When he was too old to carry his magnum, he continued to kill his geese with a .410!

LESLIE R. JAMES,
Peaslake, Guildford.

SHOTGUN CLEANING

Sir,—Further to Mr. H. E. Taylor's letter on gun cleaning, I would like to have the opinions of readers on the "boiling out" of barrels.

I have always carried this out, and, after eight months' continuous use, firing about 300 cartridges, my barrel is still as good as new.

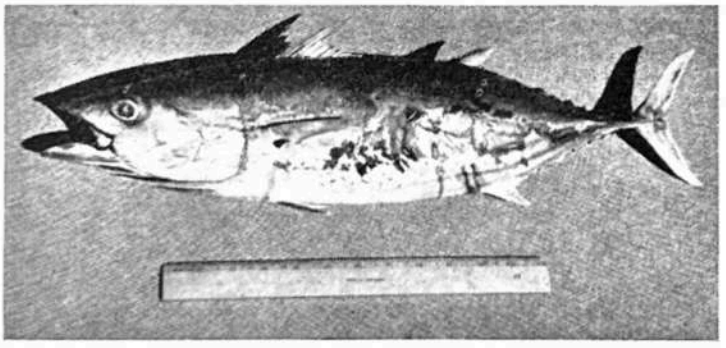
P. A. GUNNELL,
Upminster, Essex.

A WELSH COLLIE'S RETRIEVE

Sir,—While on an early morning walk along the beach with his Welsh collie Lassie, Mr. Cane of Highcliffe-on-Sea noticed a fish floundering in the surf.

Lassie, a fully trained cattle dog, plunged into the water, set upon the fish and after a good struggle managed to bring it to her master and laid it down on the dry sand. It was later identified as a young tunny fish weighing 6¼ lbs. and measuring 22in. with a girth of 14in.

COUNTRYMAN,
Hants.



A 6½lb. tunny landed after a struggle. (See letter, "A Welsh Collie's Retrieve.")

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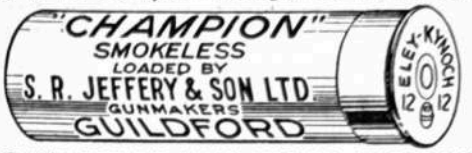

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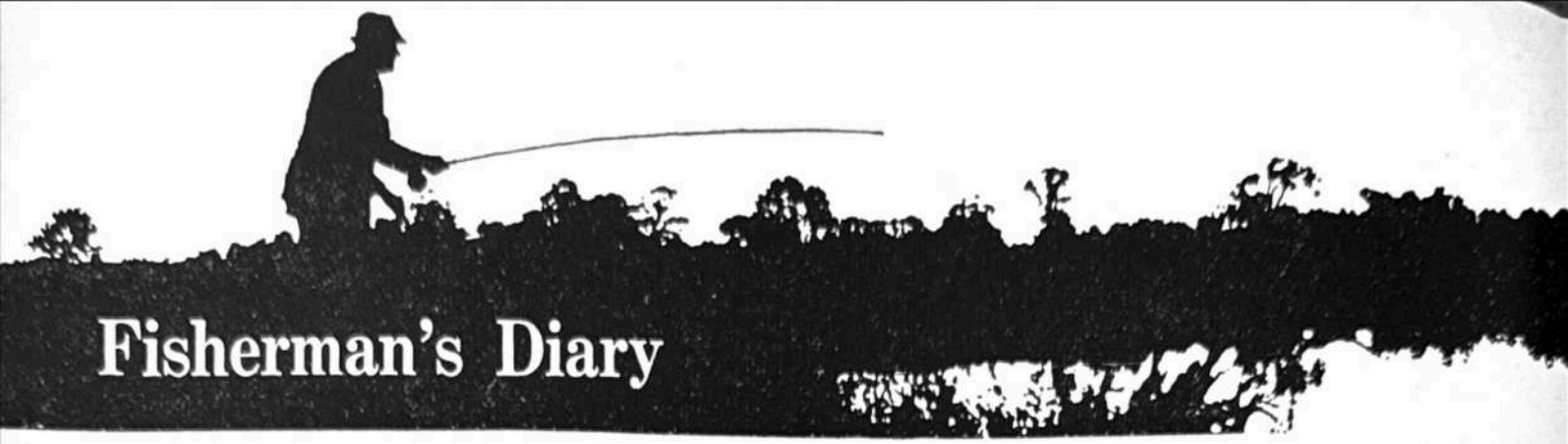

Fisherman's Diary

by Coridon

I SUPPOSE every River Board issues an annual report, even if it consists only of a few sheets of duplicating paper. Few of them seem to distribute their reports to others than members of the Board, local councils and other bodies and individuals with direct responsibility.

This is a great pity, for the reports that *are* more widely distributed prove that every River Board encounters during the year a multitude of problems and unusual occurrences which are of great interest to anglers and many other members of the general public and which never reach the popular or even the angling Press.

Some half-dozen Boards issue their reports in printed pamphlet form. I have before me one of these, the 5th Annual Report (1956-57) of the Nene River Board, an illustrated booklet of 64 pages.

It has much to say about fisheries and pollution in the waters under its control, and the fact that 11,773 annual and 8,351 weekly angling licences were issued gives an exact measure of its popularity among coarse fish anglers.

A few quotations will give a better idea of the diversity of the information provided than any amount of comment.

"Trout have now become established in the Willow Brook, and the one year old fish released in 1955 have reached 14 inches in length. Angling has not yet been permitted on this water, but it is hoped that a restricted amount will be available in the near future."

"An eel of 6lb. was taken near the Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice."

"The feature of the year is the report of sea trout ascending the tidal portion of the river. One of 18lb. was found injured and removed by hand at Long Sutton. Another of 1¼lb. was caught above the Dog-in-a-Doublet Sluice during an angling contest."

"The main industry in the greater part of the Board's area is agriculture, and in the low lying fen country to the north-east of Peterborough peas are an important crop. When peas are vined a particularly foul liquid drains from the stacks."

Pollution

The Nene River Board has a good deal of pollution to contend with, but according to the report it is doing its utmost (within the limited powers possessed by any River Board) to curb or remove the causes. It is interesting to note that the National Farmers' Union adds its weight to anti-pollution measures when pollution prevents the watering of cattle.

On the other hand, some members of that union are said to be careless with sprays, weed-killers, and their containers.

Unrecognised Kelt

I had occasion to call at a Welsh inn during a September tour. It was one of those hotels that have the rights of some water, advertise the fishing, and get a number of angling guests, usually beginners, on the strength of it.

The landlord did not fish and knew little about the subject, so there was no angling tradition and no one to give advice. There is nothing actually wrong in all this, and in this particular instance the novices who stayed at the hotel had far better sport and more salmon than, I imagine, a good many experienced anglers found on more famous waters with more famous inns.

Four salmon, the day's catch, were brought into the little bar for inspection. Three were excellent fish, but the fourth was as sorry a looking kelt as I have ever seen, yet it was proudly displayed. All were roughly 30in. long, and three of them went to weights between 10lb. and 12lb. The fourth fish weighed only a few ounces over 7lb.

It would be a real help to these learner anglers if someone with at least the rudiments of the game were available.

Loaches in Fishponds

I was on the conventional Sunday afternoon tour of my host's garden, and I regret to say I was much more interested in his twin ornamental goldfish ponds than in the flowers and shrubs carefully tagged with unpronounceable Latin names. I asked idly if he had any other fish in them, and to my surprise he said there were a few loaches in each.

He had read somewhere that loaches cleared up all scraps of animal matter that might otherwise have decayed, so he got a boy to catch some in the local stream. They were retiring creatures, and he knew they were still there only because they once appeared at the surface when thunder threatened.

Jewelled Ormer

The excessively low tides of late September gave the ormer gatherers of the Channel Islands a better chance of a good bag than is normally the case.

These large shellfish are collected from rocks and crevices beneath the surface, and the lower the tide the greater the unexploited field. Cooked fresh, ormers are said to taste like veal. Bottled (the way most people know them) I think they taste like tender (i.e., rubberless) whelks.

One of the Channel Islanders on this occasion gathered an ormer which had within its shell a gold and diamond ring.

17th-Century Fishing

My occasional small purchases from and antiquarian bookseller of considerable repute bring in their train the regular receipt of his catalogues. His latest contains a list of titles dealing with commercial fishing in the 17th-century, and I hope some shortened extracts will interest others as much as they did me.

"John Keymor's observation made upon the Dutch Fishing, about the year 1601. Demonstrating that there is more wealth raised out of herrings and other fish in His Majesties seas by the neighbouring nations in one year, than the King of Spain hath from the Indies in four . . ."

"England's Way to Win Wealth . . . or a plain description what great profit it will bring unto the Common-wealth of England by erecting, building, and of adventuring of Busses, to sea, a fishing. With a true relation of the inestimable wealth which is yearly taken out of His Majesties Sea, by the Hollanders, by their great number of Busses, Pinks, and Lineboats, etc."—1614.

"Britaines Busse, or a computation as well of the charge of a Busse or Herring Fishing Ship, as also of the gain and profit thereby."—1615.

"The Herring-Busse trade; expressed in sundry particulars, both for the building of Busses, making of deep sea nets, and other appurtenances, also the right curing of the Herring for Foreign Vent . . ."—1641.

"A Narrative of the Royal Fishings of Great Britain and Ireland, with Busses for Pickled Herrings and Barrel-Cod, after the manner of the Hollanders."—1661.

"Ixoyoohpa, or The Royal Trade of Fishing. Discovering the inestimable profit the Hollanders have made thereof, with the vast emolument and advantages that will redound to His Sacred Majesty and his three Kingdoms by the improvement of it."—1662.

One can trace the gradual improvement as we copied the Dutch, and the new century opens with a burst of optimism: "An Essay for the raising of a National Fishery by the Poor of England, without tax or money, that shall employ and maintain all the Poor and growing Poor of this Nation for ever, and in less than five years, totally ease the Publick from that grievous Burden."—1700.

The British Field Sports Society have revised and enlarged their publication "What Fly Is That?" Compiled by W. Pepperell Pitt, this pocket sized chart is an invaluable aid to the fly-fisherman in rapidly identifying the common flies to be found on and in the neighbourhood of British rivers and lakes.

"What Fly Is That?" is available, price 2s. 6d., from the Secretary, British Field Sports Society, 51 Victoria Street, London, S.W.1.

Clay Pigeon Shooting Fixtures

Oct. 12: Childrey C.P.S.C., the Plough, Little Coxwell, Faringdon, Berks. Club Shoot (special). 2 p.m.

Oct. 19: Hayfield G.C., Derbyshire. Wappenshaw Meeting (members). 2 p.m.

Oct. 20: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 10.15 a.m.

Oct. 26: North Wales G.C. 100 Bird Continental Ball Trap Shoot. 1 p.m.

Oct. 26: Bowland and District G.C., nr. Clitheroe, Lancs. Members' Cup Shoot.

Oct. 27: Beverley and District G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 1.30 p.m.

Nov. 3: Birmingham G.C., Brockhill Lane, Redditch. 10.15 a.m.

Nov. 3: Harrogate G.C., Yorks. Members' Shoot. 1.45 p.m.

NEVER THE TWAIN

by David Stone

SMALL-BORE shooters in the main have a preconceived notion of the skill required by game shooters compared with the degree of skill required in their own sphere of shooting, and generally the opinion is that their skill is not equal to ours.

There are also those who deny our skill ;—even in our own ranks there are those who claim that small-bore shooting has become too easy ! There may well be grounds for that view, admitted by us for we are now steadily changing over to the metric target which certainly demands a higher degree of skill than the old decimal.

Personally, I am not so sure that the sport of the shotgunner is in any way inferior. Mind you, I am no expert with a shotgun, but I have done a bit of it here and there though I never could get the hang of shooting anything either on the wing or on the ground, if it was going in any other direction than from my left to right. I suppose there is an explanation for that kind of fault !

Unfortunately this argument can never be settled by any kind of match and so it will continue for a long time yet.

Incidentally, one of the members of our club does a little rough shooting when he can get it and of course his leg is pulled unmercifully should he get a below average score on our range and this leg-pulling will inevitably lead to this argument about the relative skill of the two sports.

Occasionally somebody will add another point of discussion to the argument by saying: "Well, what can you expect ? It is no good trying to mix shotgun shooting with small-bore!"

Now this is really a most interesting point, for not only is this accusation levelled at game shooting not mixing with small-bore, but much more often is the same thing said of full-bore and small-bore shooting.

About the former I would not attempt to argue, for although the techniques are widely different I cannot see why the two cannot be successfully mixed. Game shooting assuredly requires an excellent eye, a deal of patience and intense concentration and these are undeniably also the necessary attributes of a good small-bore shooter. What is more, game shooting surely helps a man to keep physically fit and this is an asset—I am tempted to say a necessary ingredient for success in all forms of shooting.

Which Comes First

With regard to full-bore and small-bore not mixing, I would suggest that this depends, to an extent, upon the order. By this I mean, if you turn in the first place from full-bore the change-over comes easily, at least that is my own experience, and never yet have I found that mixing the two has had any detrimental effect on either.

But if a small-bore shooter turns for the first time to full-bore, then he may encounter difficulties, especially in snap and rapid practices. I have seen, mainly I must admit when comparatively young, that small-bore shooters at their first attempt on the full-bore range, are tempted to "hang on" and follow through much too long, but those faults are soon eradicated.

No, I cannot agree with any argument put forward against "mixing it." In fact I am much in favour of it if you can, for I feel that by doing so it helps to keep you interested and full of enthusiasm for the sport as a whole.

Clay Pigeon Shooting

(The C.P.S. Fixture List is on facing page)

Reports and Results

The **Bedford Gun Club** Autumn skeet championship was shot under dry conditions, but with half a gale blowing all day. The 40 guns attending were equal to the weather and the scores suffered only slightly as shown below.

There were two noteworthy innovations at this shoot :—Class AA, 93 to 100%, was introduced as well as the usual A 85 to 93%, B 78 to 85% and C 78%. By putting the real cracks in a bracket by themselves a more lively interest was taken by the other classes.

Secondly, and perhaps more important, call skeet was used instead of silent skeet. This was extremely popular and an informal poll taken showed almost 100% in favour. This system of calling for the bird simplifies everything ; it adds to the equality of the competition, cuts the referee's job by 50% as he needs only to watch the bird and not the shooter as well, and it reduces the number of appeals to vanishing point. It adds somewhat to the colour of the event by the individuality of the different methods of calling.

It is sincerely hoped that the C.P.S.A. will give serious consideration to modifying the rules to the use of call skeet.

An indication of how great a leveller the .410 event, which attracted two squads, can be, was shown by the fact that it was won by John Pletcher who is approximately 14 years old with a 23 x 40.

Our next open event is the Wappenshaw on Saturday, December 14.

High Gun, J. Wheater, 95 x 100.

Class AA : 1, Max Freeman, 94 ; 2, L. Nickols, 94 ; 3, G. Freeman, 88.

Class A : 1, A. E. Halsey, 91 ; 2, D. Allingham, 90 ; 3, J. Kidwill, 89 ; 4, C. Wilson, 89 ;

Class B : 1, N. E. V. Dance, 88; 2, A. J. Freeman, 86 ; 3, J. Pletcher, 83 ; 4, L. Dawson, 82.

Class C : 1, A. E. Johnson, 31 ; 2, J. Harris, 30.

.410 : 1, John Pletcher, 23 ; 2, Col. K. Pletcher, 23 ; 3, N. H. Cook, 23.

Two man team : 1, A. J. Freeman and M. Freeman, 180 ; 2, A. R. Dewbrey and E. L. Nickols, 179.

11 Skeet 20s were made.

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Shoulder to shoulder at the Surrey Open.

WIND AND LIGHT

by Squeaker

ONE of the several salutary lessons which were very forcibly driven home to me at the Ham and Petersham part of the Surrey meeting was that one cannot expect to "dope" wind correctly at all times. The wind was not really stormy, but I found its strength varied so rapidly and the changes of direction, very often of 180°, were so frequent, that I, for one, just could not cope and was thankful to escape with only one eight. There was only one 100 yard poss. shown on the unlimited list when we left at 4.30, so things must have been difficult. All this on I.S.U. targets, too.

Usually the small-bore shooter will kid himself that he can dope wind and is able to shoot under difficult conditions. The truth is that as far as possible he avoids wind like the plague. A glance along the 100 yards butts at Ham disclosed some wonderful examples of "currant buns," and while this year's "Bisley breeze" was not very strong, it too caused havoc with most attempts to shoot those tight groups which we like so much.

Wind, and also light changes, we are told, are the causes of most of the wild shots which keep appearing on our targets, and it is the wind, by a long chalk, which causes the damage. In spite of oft-repeated stories I have never found changes of light to cause changes in zero, except when a shadow is actually cast over the target. I may be a lucky exception, but I am sure I have never dropped a point because of light changes. I have used plenty of other excuses and may only be saving this one for a later date. The range on which I do most of my shooting is in a quarry, and as the sun moves round the hill near the range remarkable changes do take place but do not cause us any bother. I can understand that when using a blade foresight variations in light intensity may cause one to over or under-estimate the "thin strip of white" which one is enjoined to keep between the blade and aiming mark, so bringing about changes in elevation. But apart from veterans and Russian Olympic stars, who use a blade foresight for serious target shooting?

Race Against Time

On one occasion I did think that I had at last encountered trouble with changing light intensity. In common with many other shooters I find that during the early and late rounds of the National League one is engaged in a race against the clock to finish before the moon actually comes out. On one particular evening we were shooting and, as usual, had shot our 100 yard cards first. We then sighted in for the 50 yard cards and started on our "job cards." To our surprise we found that all our shots were going low, and so began a tedious business of clicking after each shot until, when we were about half-finished this card, things became normal again, and we finished without difficulty. On the firing point the usual inquest then took place and we all agreed that the fast-fading light had been the cause of our trouble.

Dew Drops

What we could not understand was that following the maxim "light down, sights down" we should have been shooting high. On returning to the table outside the club-house to pack our gear we suddenly found the answer. Our shooting boxes were covered with quite a substantial coating of moisture. What we had blamed the light for had apparently been caused by a sharp drop in temperature as the light vanished. Apparently the temperature had dropped sharply past the "dew point" and dew had formed quite suddenly. Right, or wrongly, we deduced that this formation of dew had offered increased resistance to our bullets, causing the low shots. It may be that in addition to the masses of "equipment" which we lug around with us from range to range we would be wise to include a wet-dry bulb thermometer complete with conversion chart turning humidity into minutes of angle!

My original thesis that one cannot dope wind correctly all the time obviously requires further explanation. It appears to me that after a great deal of practice and much experience the competent shooter acquires a system which works reasonably well *most of the time*, but on occasions he encounters conditions in which his system does not work and he is baffled. The basic rule of target shooting is that one must do the same thing in the same way for every shot. One must hold, aim, squeeze, etc. in exactly the same manner for each shot, or variations are bound to creep in at the target. The same rule holds for wind doping. One must try to release each shot when the wind is coming from the same direction at the same velocity. The big question is, how does one decide when the wind is right?

Here seem to come a multitude of methods. Talking this over with shooters whose advice I value, I have found that few of them put their trust in flags. Most of them prefer to rely upon the "feel" of the wind. "Feel" is calculated in many ways, but the commonest appears to be the use of one's face as a wind gauge. No matter how strongly the wind is blowing there always occur pauses or "let ups" in its intensity and this appears to be the time to get one's shot away. The pause is of course only a local one near the firing point and in most cases the flags down the range will not give much indication that this is taking place and are not always to be trusted.

Word of Warning

The method, then, is to wait for the pauses, glance at the nearest flag on the side of the range from which the wind is blowing to make sure that its direction has not changed, and away goes the shot. A word of warning, however. Make sure that when the time comes to fire you are really looking through the sights at the target and not looking with part of your concentration at the target and part at the flag. A really juicy eight was my reward for this flag watching at Bisley this year.

This "wind on the face" method is not the only one used; some prefer to feel the wind on their hands, ankles, legs, etc., and open shooting gloves, shorts, sandals, etc. are used by pupils of this school of thought. A very small minority of wind dopers prefer to shoot when the wind is at its strongest. On several occasions, in practice, I have tried this method, and while it gives quite reasonable results, when one does let away a bad one it really is a bad one.

A method which I have never been able to figure out and use is that of using the mirage which one gathers is widely used in America. Apparently one focuses the scope at about 75 yards and watches to see what the wind is doing. Other shooters watch blades of grass to give them force and direction, but whenever I try to do this the runner invariably tramples down the blade of grass which I am using.

Wind noise is also very useful on some ranges. Rustling trees, shaking corrugated iron roofs, etc. can all give one an indication of what is taking place. On one of our local ranges I have had good results by shooting when I cannot hear a bush behind the firing point shaking.

Apart from all of this, however, I am sure that the real expert develops an "instinct" for deciding when to shoot. Without really knowing why this instinct tells him when to shoot. This is the reason why, when one asks such an expert how he managed to keep them all in, he is quite genuinely unable to give a convincing reply.

I am sure that the great thing about shooting in difficult conditions is that one must make up one's mind to accept the fact that points are going to be dropped, and then set out to drop as few as possible. A shooter once said that the wind which causes most dropped points is the wind up, and I am sure of this.

In conclusion I would like someone to tell me why it is that when one is shooting in a strong wind the shots which are blown out are almost always of perfect elevation and never high or low. Yet another example of the perversity of nature?

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Mr. Joe Wheater Breaks the Record

WHILE at first sight there may appear to be little or no connection between the middleweight boxing championship of the world and the breaking of 1,000 clay pigeons in record time, some of us who were privileged to witness the performances of Messrs J. Harold Crang and Joe Wheater this year found a certain similarity between the two events. For just as surely as a fighter beat a craftsman in the Robinson-Basilio battle, Wheater defeated Crang in more friendly competition, but nonetheless in not dissimilar fashion.

At Crayford, it will be remembered, style and polished organisation down to the last detail were outstanding features of the shoot arranged by Mr. Robert Churchill. In his favour Mr. Crang had the use of three matched pairs of guns, two expert loaders, practice on the previous day, good light and fine weather, to say nothing of a bottle of champagne! For all that, no one will deny that he employed all to the best advantage, and we shall always recall with pleasure tinged with envy the display of shooting in classical style to which he treated us for just over 47½ minutes.

But we shall remember equally Joe Wheater's shoot on the Bedford Gun Club's ground, for here was a supreme example of a naturally brilliant shot breaking the previous record by more than 5½ minutes, in spite of differences in technique which those who had seen the Crang shoot thought might beat him.

Arrangements at Bedford were impromptu. The trappers, the loaders, and the challenger himself "picked it up" as they went along. How quickly all fell into the rhythm which an endurance tests of this nature demands is reflected in the scores and times below. Using five unmatched 12-bores with varying chokes, stocks, barrel lengths, bends, casts and trigger pulls, Mr. Wheater dealt almost unerringly with clays far out and point-blank, fifteen feet high or a foot from the ground, shooting with such consistency and tenacity that a remark from the crowd "If he drops dead he'll still go on killing them" seemed singularly apt.

The photographs on this page give an idea of the scene at Bedford and the efforts required by all concerned to make this memorable shoot possible. Our congratulations to Joe Wheater and to the Bedford Gun Club.

The Story in Pictures

The top photograph shows the six traps set up on a concrete wall specially built for the occasion. This required a lot of hard work by Bedford G.C. members, as there is no water supply on their ground, and water for concrete mixing had to be carried from a gravel pit at least 100 yards away. Clays were presented by Mr. E. T. Peacock and Impax cartridges loaded with 1oz. of No. 8, by Messrs. I.C.I. The traps were designed by Mr. Don Purcell.

In the second picture Joe Wheater discusses loading drill with Messrs. Peacock and Purcell. At the table in the background sat the scorers and the timekeepers, and a "battery" of stop watches ensured extremely accurate timekeeping.

The team of loaders can be seen in action in the third photograph. After firing Mr. Wheater passed his empty gun to the left and it was then taken round to the end of the "chain," loaded and returned to him in sequence, Mr. Peacock putting off the safety catch as he passed each gun to the shooter.

Finally Joe Wheater poses with Don Purcell, the referee after a marathon 60 minutes. He looks somewhat tired and admitted it, but who would not?

Clays Broken	Clays Missed	Clays Shot at	Accumulative Shot at	Clays missed by number as shot at	Time For 100	Elapsed Time
1st 100	7	107	107	13, 28, 38, 53, 72, 95, 97	3:14.5	3:14.5
2nd 100	6	106	213	113, 129, 157, 176, 198, 212	3:38	6:52.5
3rd 100	8	108	321	221, 236, 237, 238, 262, 287, 292, 298	4:08	11:00.5
4th 100	11	111	432	327, 334, 348, 350, 359, 364, 398, 401, 410, 417, 422	4:55.5	15:56
5th 100	5	105	537	433, 452, 459, 500, 522	3:40	19:36
6th 100	13	113	650	568, 581, 596, 598, 600, 608, 610, 612, 616, 622, 636, 639, 647	3:55	23:31
7th 100	9	109	759	669, 682, 688, 690, 704, 712, 719, 742, 750	4:38	28:09
8th 100	16	116	875	766, 767, 769, 770, 772, 777, 782, 792, 808, 812, 824, 831, 842, 854, 871, 872	5:13	33:22
9th 100	9	109	984	880, 892, 937, 941, 947, 949, 959, 961, 979	3:59	37:21
10th 100	14	114	1,098	990, 996, 1,005, 1,013, 1,028, 1,035 1,050, 1,055, 1,060, 1,065, 1,078, 1,080, 1,095, 1,096	5:01.5	42:22.5
11th 100	18	118	1,216	1,109, 1,119, 1,121, 1,123, 1,134, 1,135, 1,136, 1,138, 1,149, 1,155, 1,157, 1,161, 1,169, 1,187, 1,197, 1,199, 1,207, 1,211		
12th 100	12	112	1,328	1,240, 1,242, 1,250, 1,255, 1,270, 1,277, 1,280, 1,293, 1,298, 1,301, 1,306, 1,313		
13th 100	17	117	1,445	1,336, 1,347, 1,348, 1,352, 1,353, 1,374, 1,380, 1,383, 1,388, 1,400, 1,405, 1,413, 1,414, 1,424, 1,428, 1,439, 1,445		
8	1	9	1,454	1,449		60:00

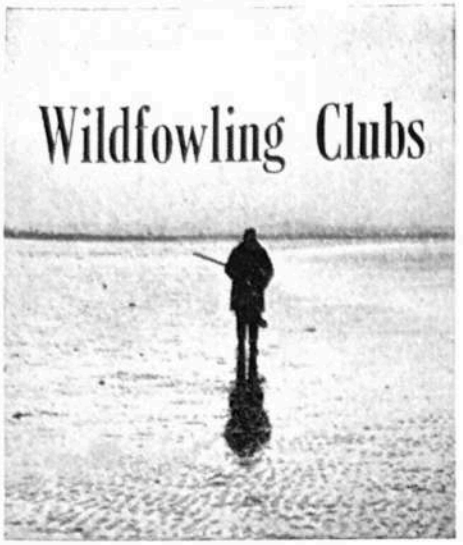
Total Birds Killed in One Hour = 1,308

Lost = 146 Shot at = 1,454

Mr. J. H. Crang's time for 1,000 kills = 47 mins. 53.8 secs.
Mr. J. Wheater's time for 1,000 kills = 42 mins. 22.5 secs.

Winning margin = 5 mins. 31.3 secs.

Wildfowling Clubs



The Wildfowlers' Association of Great Britain and Ireland: Hon. Secretary, Lt.-Commdr. J. W. Anderton, R.N.V.R., 19 Castle Street, Liverpool, 2.

HON. SECRETARY'S NOTES

Formation of new clubs. I am in touch with a W.A.G.B.I. member, Mr. R. M. Carver, of The Clough, Keeper's Lane, Wergs, Wolverhampton, who, like this Association, considers that there is a pressing need to form a club in his area. Will all those interested, and who live within a 25 mile radius of Wergs, please get in touch with Mr. Carver at his address as soon as possible.

In the Leicester area Mr. F. W. Wildman, an enthusiastic wildfowler of Wentworth Station Close, Kirby Muxloe, Leicester, feels the need, as we do, for a club in his area. May I suggest therefore that fowlers living within a 25 mile radius of Kirby Muxloe contact Mr. Wildman.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Club rules and membership books. When assisting in the formation of new clubs I hand out various forms of guidance including an example Rule Book. These are now becoming short in supply and I would be grateful if club secretaries will send me two or three copies each.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

The Dumfriesshire and Lake Counties Area Committee. I am pleased to report the formation of a new joint Council situated in N.W. England, to be known as The Dumfriesshire and Lake Counties Area Committee embracing The Cumberland and Dumfriesshire W.A., The Keswick and District W.A., The Westmorland W.A. and The South Cumberland W.A. This is excellent news and we wish this new committee every success. It is interesting to note that more and more clubs feel the need to form themselves into area committees in this way.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Solway. The new Area Committee at their first meeting on September 19 considered the position regarding safety measures and pending the adoption of a suitable national distress signal wildfowlers in the Solway area should now adopt the following procedure when in distress: *One shot or flash on lamp—pause—two shots or two flashes on lamp—pause—one shot or flash on lamp,* this signal to be repeated at regular intervals. The local police have been informed that this procedure will be adopted in the shooting season.

✦ ✦ ✦ ✦

Affiliation fees. With the opening of the new season many clubs will be holding their A.G.M.s in the coming weeks. The unanimous decision reached at the W.A.G.B.I. A.G.M. this year was that affiliation fees should be paid in future on January 1 each year based on the Club's membership at that date. The rate is 2s. 6d. per full shooting member and 1s. per head for all other members. The basis on which individual W.A.s have hitherto paid fees has varied considerably, e.g. some have paid in April for the subsequent twelve months some in November for the year beginning in September, others have paid at the end of the season for the preceding twelve months, whilst only a very few have entirely forgotten.

It is appreciated that the new system may involve a little research and it is quite possible that some Clubs may have paid already a proportion of January's fees. Any W.A. in doubt therefore, is requested to contact W.A.G.B.I.'s honorary treasurer who will give him every assistance.

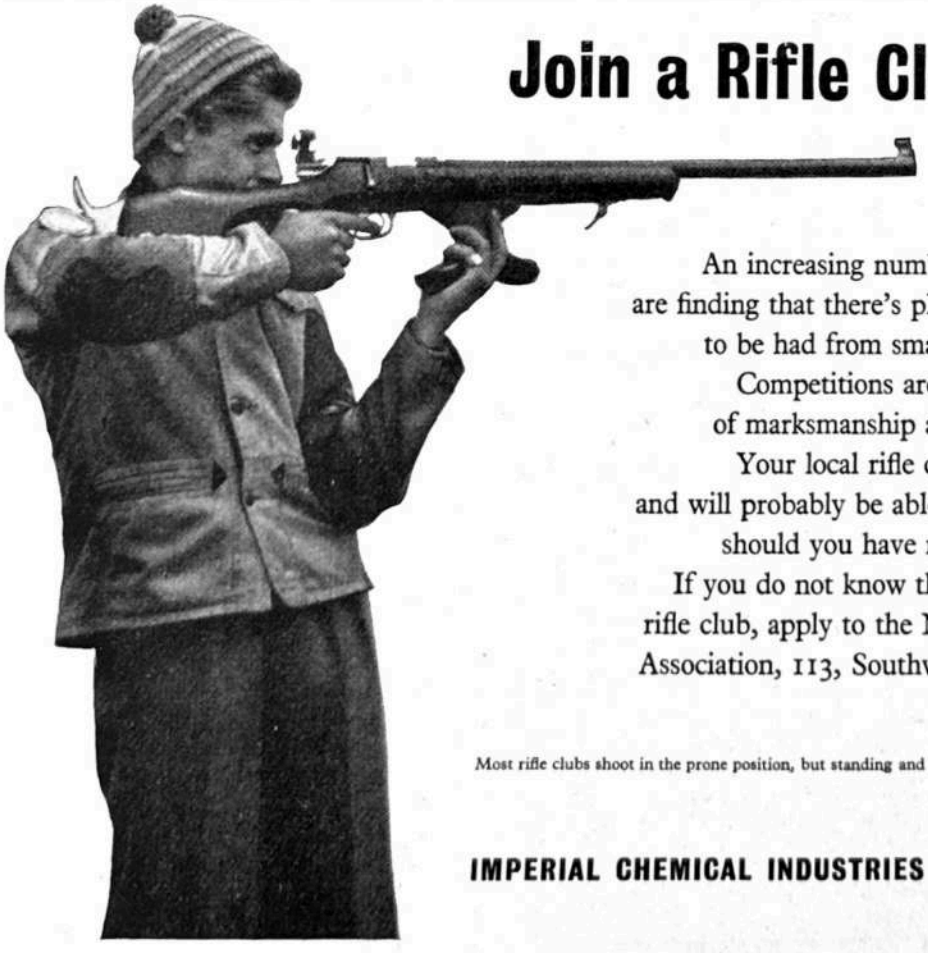
In reaching their decision the A.G.M. agreed that newly-formed W.A.s should not be expected to find 2s. 6d. per member immediately and that the old rate of 1s. per head might apply until a Club became firmly established. Here again the hon. treasurer has promised to be co-operative dependent on, as he puts it, "just depends how long in the tooth the Club may be." Finally, we would like to remind all members of the W.A.s of a remark passed at the A.G.M. "Two pence halfpenny a month is little enough to insure your sport at National level."

CLUB REPORTS

Mr. Stanley Cushman of Henfield recently presented a most handsome cup for annual competition between the Royal Oak Clay Pigeon Club and the Adur Valley Wildfowlers' Association at skeet. The shoot took place at the Royal Oak ground at Cowfold on September 22 and each team consisted of ten guns. Some slight problems arose over the selection of teams because of the high percentage of dual membership, but all was settled amicably.

Both clubs being relatively small, by its rules the Royal Oak is limited in size, ten-men teams produced an excellent cross-section of each club and evened out such factors as "feeling on top of the world," "right on form this morning," "Sunday morning hangover," "stiff arm," "can't hit a darn thing today," "where did the shooting secretary get these cartridges?" "the wind caught that one just as I pulled," "these clays need S.G. before they'll break." Because of the time factor a modified form of skeet is usually shot at Cowfold, certain infidels from other parts have been heard to refer to this as "Cowfold Wallop," but on this occasion the full round of 20 birds was used.

The final result was a very close finish, the Royal Oak proving the winners by 5 birds. Prizes in the shape of full and half bottles had been presented for the two hghest scores in each team. These were won by: Royal Oak, R. Walker and R. Thomas. Adur Valley, R. J. Sewell and C. C. Prestwich. Miss Annette Cushman presented the cup to Mr. Hugh Williams, chairman and captain of the Royal Oak team, and the individual prizes to the winners.



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Most rifle clubs shoot in the prone position, but standing and kneeling shooting is becoming more popular.

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Gundog News

Conducted by P. R. A. MOXON, Herne Common, Herne Bay, Kent

THAT success at field trials can be achieved in comparatively few years by meticulous attention to breeding and training has been proved by the select few who have approached the whole idea on a scientific basis and with a will to win through. Among retriever trial enthusiasts I consider that Mr. W. Lawrence Taylor, of Galleywood, near Chelmsford, Essex, is a good example of enthusiam and perseverance rewarded with success. In the belief that details of his kennels and dogs would be of general interest to readers, I journeyed there recently, where Mr. and Mrs. Taylor received my wife and I most hospitably in the charming house, part of which is several hundreds of years old, and combines beauty with efficiency.

Mr. Taylor is a fruit farmer, and from the state of his orchards I should say a very efficient and successful one. His labradors are all kennelled near the house and trained in the orchards by Dick Male, a handler for whom I have long had the greatest respect, which was increased after witnessing him in action on "home ground." Mr. Taylor believes in hardy dogs, and most of his kennels have outside, uncovered runs of concrete, well drained and scrupulously clean. He also has some covered kennels and, very wisely, an isolation block for visiting bitches and newcomers to the establishment. The Galleywood Kennels are an example of the benefits of raw meat feeding—every dog that I saw was in the pink of condition and "rarin' to go." One or two of the inmates may have been a shade too fat (Dick Male had just been away on holiday) but even these dogs worked with pace and enthusiasm.

After an excellent lunch we were entertained to a display of retriever work in the orchard behind the kennels. Dick Male brought out dog after dog and put them through their paces whilst Mr. Taylor gave me interesting details of their breeding and training to date. From the first, one could not help being impressed by Dick's quiet and efficient handling methods, and, above all, the great confidence in him which all the dogs displayed. I do not think that I have ever witnessed dogs showing greater affection and respect for their trainer than I did on this occasion. Although no dogs took liberties with their handler, they obviously adored him and one could tell from the way they sat and "ate" Dick with their eyes that harshness plays no part in the training of the Galleywood dogs.

Double Dummy Practice

The dogs were put through the "double dummy" practice, retrieving from distances which gave them a chance to display both their pace and style, and as on each occasion one dummy was a blind retrieve, their noses were given a thorough test. F.T.Ch. Galleywood Shot, an attractive dog by F.T.Ch. Staindrop Murton Marksman out of Hiwood Peggy (who is dam of 4 F.T.Chs.), and bred by Lady Hill-Wood, was the first one out, and he put up a polished performance with all the drive and enthusiasm of his sire plus a greater measure of control. This breeding seems to have produced an almost ideal dog, giving Shot all the good points of both parents and, above all, "trainability," which

Handler Dick Male with a group of the Galleywood dogs.

characteristic (and a very important one) he seems likely to be imparting to his progeny. If ever a dog was fitted with "four-wheel brakes" it was Shot. One toot from Dick's whistle and he was down, and out like a bullet from a gun to hand signal, working in the exact direction indicated.

A Future For This Bitch

Galleywood Pigeon came next, a fine looking bitch with a deep chest and a sensible head, although a shade on the fat side. By F.T.Ch. Galleywood Swift (who was by Int. F.T.Ch. Treveilyr Swift, and one of my favourite post-war labradors at trials) out of Mr. Vincent Routledge's Hallingbury Pigeon, she was a nice mover with a very fast and clean pick up and under excellent control, handling well at all times. Two and a half years old and coming into her prime—I predict a future for this bitch. Galleywood Trump, another big, strong dog, very reminiscent of his sire, F.T.Ch. Greatford Teal (winner of the last Retriever Championship and since exported to America), has great drive and style with a beautiful tail action, but appeared to me rather pig-headed and at 19 months, naturally lacking the experience of the first two dogs. When he has had some serious work I believe that he will prove a very strong competitor for trial honours. Trump was bred by Lady Hill-Wood, his dam being F.T.Ch. Hiwood Gypsy (litter sister to Shot).

Of the younger dogs which I saw, one was also by Greatford Teal out of Hiwood Gypsy. This was a six months' old bitch, Hiwood Style, not long started training and showing early promise as regards pace and style. Though on the narrow side, she should prove a useful worker and will probably fill out later. Another Greatford Teal puppy, Galleywood Jet, out of Roffey Sally, a daughter of Rockstead Footspark, and bred by David Cock, also six months' of age, was beginning to respond well to Dick Male's handling, showing early natural ability plus pace and style, and an even younger puppy, Galleywood Monty, by Galleywood Shot out of Strattonley Ruff showed how breeding will out. Although not seriously started in training, naturally, this small, compact puppy seems to have the right idea and to be good material to work on.

Galleywood Gaytime, by F.T.Ch. Staindrop Murton Marksman out of F.T.Ch. Roffey Gaytime, and now 3½ years old, is probably Mr. Taylor's favourite in the kennel. I remember giving this excellent bitch first prize after a splendid performance at Gorhambury in the Cambridge Field Trial Society's Open Stake two years ago. Very fast and stylish, bold in cover and a good bitch to handle (although apt to be unpredictable at times, Dick Male told me!) she has proved a good brood bitch and there are some promising puppies out of her in the kennel, by Oxendon Shadow. Although Gaytime was in season when I visited Galleywood, she worked well despite her few weeks "off."

Mr. Taylor's record at trials is an impressive one, his kennel having made up 3 F.T.Chs. and won 70 awards since 1946. Although not a commercial kennel in the strict sense of the term, no trouble or expense has been spared where the dogs are concerned. Mr. Taylor has shown great wisdom and forethought in two matter in particular. He has concentrated upon breeding from the right strains and "outing" any dog which did not come up to the high standard he set himself. Secondly, and equally important, he engaged a first rate man to train and handle his dogs. In Dick Male he has a man of ideal temperament for training and trials—calm, confident, slow of movement and deliberate in all his actions. Dick is one of our quietest and most confident handlers at the present time, and though now concentrating upon retrievers at Galleywood,

F.T.Ch. Galleywood Shot.

he is equally at home with spaniels, which breed he professes to prefer. Indeed, he has the rare distinction of being the only man to win a second place in the Spaniel Championship with a field spaniel. He joined Mr. Taylor in 1948 after war service, having previously worked with the well known Bill East and Colonel G. H. Badcock. Dick has been asked to referee the next Spaniel Championship stake.

I find that there are lessons to be drawn from every visit I make to gundog kennels. I always come away having learned something, and this visit proved no exception, for I picked the brains of both Mr. Taylor and Dick Male. As I stated at the beginning of this article, the Galleywood Kennels are an outstanding example of what can be done in a few years given the right approach, the right strains of dogs and the right man to deal with them. Attention to detail in breeding, feeding, rearing and training pays off handsomely, as in this case. It should be noted that Mr. Taylor does not have ideal ground for training dogs. As I know only too well, orchards and fruit plantations provide difficult and exasperating country, particularly for training wide ranging dogs like labradors. Much thought and ingenuity has to go into training dogs over such ground. Another point upon which Mr. Taylor shows great wisdom is in limiting his kennel to under twenty dogs (it usually houses twelve to fifteen), so that his trainer can concentrate upon the promising ones without any waste of time. That plenty of time and concentration is put into the actual training is shown very clearly by the attitude of the dogs to their handler, and their instant and happy response to his commands, whistle and signals. Eight to ten dogs in serious training; no "repressive treatment"; puppies started at the right age and taken along at a pace graduated according to their progress; the "outing" of failures without delay. This is the advice Mr. Taylor gave me over a cup of tea at the end of a very pleasant day. We came away impressed by all that we saw and, once again, glowing from the hospitality for which gundog people are noted. Mr. and Mrs. Taylor may well be proud of their house, fruit farm and kennels.

The Field Trophy

News that *The Field* is offering a trophy to be awarded to the winner of a field trial at Druids Lodge, Wiltshire, to be held on January 16, was given in the issue of September 20. The trial concerned is being organised by the Southern and Western Field Trial Society, and will be judged on somewhat unusual lines. It is a 16-dog stake for retrievers, to be completed in one day, and it is intended to invite entries from ten labrador owners, four from golden retriever owners, and one each from owners of a flatcoat and a curly coated retriever. The dogs will run against each other in pairs from the first round onwards. When the first round is completed a fresh draw will be made for the second round. There will then be a further draw to decide the pairings for the semi-final.

It has been stated that measures will be taken to exclude the possibility of the second best dog in the stake being knocked out in the early stages by the eventual winner, and to place the three semi-finalists other than the winner in the correct order. This event should prove of great interest to field trial enthusiasts, and it is good to know that the possibilities of improving the whole system of field trials is being explored.

Four eminent and experienced judges have been invited to officiate at this event—Lady Auckland, Major Hugh Peacock, Mr. John Kent and Mr. H. S. Lloyd—and they will have wide powers on the day. The judging of trials is no easy task at the best of times, the tests seldom being equal, as they are in America, and the whole affair being much more like a natural shooting day. We are a conservative race, and shooting and gundog men are superconservatives. New ideas and systems are not received kindly as a rule, but the proof of the pudding is in the eating, and it is to be hoped that some good will emerge from this experimental trial. *The Field* is to be congratulated upon the interest that it is showing in the welfare of field trials and gundogs, and if all concerned approach the "new" trial with an open mind much benefit may accrue.

The Yorkshire Gundog Club is holding retriever trials near Market Weighton, by kind invitation of Colonel B. P. Beale, O.B.E., M.C., on October 28 and 29. The Open Stake will be limited to 24 nominations. Full particulars and

Left to right: Capt. Eddington, headkeeper Stewart, and Major Joynson at the Cocker Club's trials at Cromlix, Dunblane, on September 16.

schedules may be obtained from Mrs. E. H. Bailey, Longclose, Bessacar, Doncaster (telephone Doncaster 55402).

* * *

Working under the handicap of a broken bone in his leg, Mrs. Badenoch Nicolson's F.T. Ch. Carswell Solomon won the Cocker Spaniel Club's all-aged stake for the second year in succession at Cromlix, Dunblane.

Second was another Scottish entry, Mr. J. H. Windle's F.T. Ch. Jordieland Buntie, and third Mr. Tom Ellis's Deewood Wendy.

Reserve and Certificate of Merit: Lieut.-Cmdr. Collard's F.T. Ch. Buoy of Elan. Certificates of Merit: Major Earnshaw and Mr. A. Mason's Osnath Snip, Mr. W. G. Fiske's Debdenhall Nicholas, and Lieut.-Cmdr. Collard's Bronze of Elan.

Only two awards were made in the Novice Stake: Bronze of Elan the winner, and Osnath Snip second.

Absent from the trial was Lady Auckland, whose husband died on the Saturday preceding the trial, but Mr. Brodie, who acted host on her behalf, said that it was her wish that the trial should go on.

The opening retrieves were all on hares, and the first bird shot — a grouse on a gorse-covered hillside — proved too much for two dogs. Then later in the morning the same bird turned up again, and again two dogs failed.

Solomon's ability in finding dead game was his strong point. Last season in the same trial and on the same ground he wiped the eye of two other dogs with a long retrieve of a snipe, and this year he again was superior to his rivals. His best was a partridge in a field of turnips on which another dog had failed. Several of the dogs were in trouble in this field. It was full of pheasants and the scent of these birds, which kept getting up in twos and threes in front of the dogs when they were out on a retrieve, put many of the dogs off.

With a Pony in Norway

(Continued from page 802)

hiker, who came to our hut one night, that he had seen a big herd on one side of a mountain, just after we had ridden across the other side of it, so I am not so sure about the infallibility of this feeding into the wind theory!

There are some fine rivers and hundreds more lakes on the plateau, some of the lakes still largely icebound. We had to ford several large, fast flowing rivers and became fairly used to seeing the water swirling over our boots, as the pony felt its way cautiously over the boulders in the bed of the river. It was quite all right provided one kept the pony facing partly upriver. One of our Norwegian friends let his take him downstream in a really fast current, and we watched with some alarm as the water rose up his pony's flank, rushing past as he went into even deeper water, but at last he worked his way ashore, grinning broadly and assuring us that he was not at all frightened, though he looks a bit unhappy on the film I took of him!

We finished our trek by following the Bjoreio river along its tremendous gorge off the plateau, back into the land of the silver birch. Northern golden plover were extremely common before we came down and quite a few were still singing and even performing their courtship flights, circling round high up with slow, flapping wing beats, reminiscent of both a lapwing and a noctule bat: how different from their dashing flight in winter.

Eventually the sad moment came when we arrived at Maurseth, left the ponies and set off back to Bergen and the boat to Newcastle. We docked at Stavanger on the way and took the opportunity to call on Dr. Holgersen, the Director of the fine museum there. He showed us all round and in the course of conversation I happened to mention that I had a ferruginous drake in my collection, which had been shot at Bergen. This created quite a stir, as there has been no other record for Norway! Thanks to his kindness, we were able to retrieve our failure to catch any lemmings for my brother, for he had a great bottle of them, pickled in alcohol, which his dog had caught last year and we were presented with five. These and some voles and the special Norwegian common shrew which we brought back, were a sufficient bribe for him to draw the mink and the lemming for this article, which was very fortunate.

And so we came home in one piece, perhaps rather to the astonishment of some of our friends and we were reminded of a most amusing Norwegian lady from Ustaoset, who asked Pam and me one day what had happened to the others who had come up to Ustaoset with us on ponies. "Oh!" she replied, when we told her that they had gone back to Al, "poor things, so after many calamities they have gone back." No, we assured her, they were all fine. "Then," she said, her face falling even further, "you stay here after many calamities. I'm so sorry!"

She was known after that as "Calamity Jane," but in spite of any qualms that there may have been, we finally got home without any calamities worse than spilling the pickled lemmings in our cabin, and I fear the next inhabitants may have been rather puzzled, if not intoxicated, by the strange smell.

Antique Gun Kits

A Second-Class Gun can be given Added Distinction by First-Class Accessories

by L. R. James

EVERY shooting man knows that his weapon will last longer and give better service if it is properly looked after. Even a cheap gun, well cared for, will last a lifetime, while a " best " gun is quite capable of serving three generations or more if given loving attention. Either weapon can be ruined in a week by neglect or carelessness.

Like most of us, I enjoy using a gun more than the cleaning of it, but I have been able to make this necessary task more pleasurable by the acquisition, over the years, of many high-class pieces of equipment from the golden days of shooting. I only wish that the quality of my modest armoury matched the perfection of some of the accessories! It is highly improbable that I will ever own a 500 guinea pair of guns, but at least I have a suitable case to keep them in.

My favourite cleaning rod is about 70 years old. It is made of whalebone with silver joints, and the handle unscrews to form a tool for chamber cleaning. The brushes and jags are made of horn so that it is impossible to score the barrel with careless use. The rod itself is strong, but it is almost flexible enough to tie into a knot, and the whole is richly ornamented. In contrast, a friend recently bought a new gun for £125, with canvas case and tackle £17 10s. extra. The cleaning rod, of varnished white wood, snapped in half the first time he used it!

The quality of the tools supplied with old best-quality guns has to be seen to be believed. One old case I owned contained four jags and cleaning brushes each fitting into an engraved dummy cartridge to keep them free from grit. The chamber brush had a delightfully shaped ebony handle, and in all, there were fourteen tools and accessories that made cleaning and tinkering a delight in itself. There were three turnscrews, each an exact fit for the three different sizes of screws, and each had a horn handle. Nowadays, it is considered, quite rightly, a near sacrilege for a gun owner to attempt to remove a screw from a good gun because of the inevitable damage caused by an ordinary screwdriver. A gunsmith always uses the correct size turnscrew and leaves no trace of his handiwork. How many guns today are supplied with tools—even poor ones?

An Uncomfortable Ride

On the rare occasions when I travel by car to a distant shoot I like to use a leg of mutton gun case. These useful accessories fit happily in the smallest car, where the old rigid case might be unstowable. I remember once driving with four passengers and a couple of dogs in a fair sized car to a shoot. The only case that would fit into the boot was my leg of mutton, and the trip was very uncomfortable for all concerned. The best leg of mutton cases are lined with thick sheepskin, and if the wool is kept well oiled the gun is protected from both damage and rust.

The best of the old type solid gun cases were made of oak, lined with green baize, and covered with cow-hide or pigskin. They were intended, of course, to protect a valuable gun from the hazards of railway travel, and in this respect they are superior to leg of mutton, or the lightweight cases that are popular today in this motoring age. I have seen an old gun case run over by a car without any damage to the case or the gun inside, but I do not recommend further experiments on these lines. It is most important that the inside of an old case is perfectly dry, as rust will develop if there is a trace of damp in the lining.

Another accessory that goes well with a high class gun case is an old cartridge magazine. These, unfortunately, are becoming favourite collectors' pieces in the U.S.A. and good ones are now hard to find. They vary in content size from 150 to 500, and the largest, when full, is almost unliftable except by a professional strong man. They had to be robust to stand the banging about they got on Euston Station!

All were massively constructed of heavy oak, and were divided into partitions with leather pulls to facilitate removal of cartridges. I have a very fine one that is covered in pigskin and has 32 brass corners or fittings let into the wood. I like to think it was designed by the architect who built the Bank of England! The workmanship is a joy to handle. If it were possible to find craftsmen today who could make it, the price would be at least £60, purchase tax extra, but it cost me £5 at an auction sale. Unhappily, it will not allow the boot lid of my old car to close on it, so I cannot show it off at a shoot.

I do not pretend that a magazine is essential to every shooting man. It is, frankly, a luxury, but it is very pleasant to have a place to store a collection of cartridges safely, with each size of shot in its own separate compartment.

By Any Other Name

With a little time and patience, it is easy to pick up similar bargains at auction sales and junk shops. Many gun accessories are mysterious things to the uninitiated, and as they are more or less useless outside a gun-room, they are often very cheap. The whalebone cleaning rod mentioned above was labelled in a junk shop as a " pocket walking stick " and cost me half-a-crown. Quite recently, I bought a fine silver plated oil bottle for 9d., and although it was inscribed " Purdey " it was sold to me as an ink-pot. On several occasions I have bought leather gun cases (most of them empty, I fear) at prices ranging from a shilling to a guinea at farm auction sales. Once I was just too late to buy a complete set of gunsmith's bore gauges in an oak case for 5s., worth today perhaps £20.

As an instance of the bargains that may sometimes be found by the lucky ones; the son of a friend of mine went up to London with £20 to buy himself a gun for his 21st birthday. He arrived rather early, and on the way to the West End dropped in to an auction sale where he bought the first lot for £5. This was a first-class London made hammerless ejector worth about £100, and soon after the hammer fell a breathless representative of the maker arrived, having been delayed in a traffic block. A tempting offer was refused and the lad now has a fine weapon that will last him a lifetime.

My own best bargain was a brand new pigskin cartridge bag that I bought for 2s. 9d. from the ladies' handbag stall at my village jumble sale!

VOODOO

by Taproot

MY pig-keeping has been bedevilled recently by The Horrible Case of the Ritual Killings.

Two sows that farrowed on the same day in July managed to rear 25 piglets between them. It may or may not be relevant to later events, that one mother gave birth to fifteen and the other to ten, and that by judicious switching the same night when both sows were still in full milk at all points I evened up the two litters to a thirteen and a twelve.

At weaning time the two litters were amalgamated into one pen. For a fortnight all went well. With increasing rations they began to put on weight. Main outlet for my home-bred pigs comes when they reach the " strong store " stage at 15 to 16 weeks old, and this lot seemed to be keeping well within the usual time-table.

Then one evening not long after feeding-time my small daughter came running to tell me with a very red face that something peculiar was going on in the fattening shed. She had been watching an odd scene through a crack in the door. Two pigs were attacking a third pig while all the others were standing in a half circle looking on.

As every farmer knows, fighting among pigs is a fairly common nuisance. Some strains of pig have longer teeth than the average and are able to inflict nasty injuries if a dispute breaks out. However, I took not too grave a view of the matter and carried down half-a-dozen bales of straw to spread around as a distraction. Half-an-hour later I walked quietly back to make sure that all was well and heard a peculiar sound. There was a persistent nagging whine of pig voices not at all in line with the impassioned shrieks usual if they fall out among themselves. The crack in the door revealed a repeat performance of the scene described before. The silent audience, the two bullies worrying a cowering form was all a little uncanny.

I went in at once, rescued the victim and was glad to find he had no serious cuts. His whole body was scratched and reddened but there was no sign of blood. With no fears for his recovery I put him by himself for the night, hoping he might be well enough after a little convalescence to rejoin the herd.

Next morning I had a shock: he was stone dead.

Things settled down for a bit after this but about ten days later, I was told the same ritual was being re-enacted. I went down with a stick, crept up behind a half-door, and waiting till the two bullies were in reach, dealt them both what pigmen call " a proper snouter." This treatment produced blood-curdling shrieks, but doubting its real effectiveness, I stayed within earshot. Sure enough within a quarter of an hour, the queer snarling began again. This time the victim was only scratched and hollered lustily when the rescue team laid hold of his ear. *But*—removed to safety he was dead in ten minutes.

It seemed that once the witch-doctor put the voodoo mark on your back you were a goner for certain.

The victims were well-grown—not runts—but one ingenious explanation put forward by an experienced pig-keeper was that they were nevertheless in some way unhealthy and that a communal vote ordered their liquidation. Some dietary deficiency that accentuated vicious tendencies was, perhaps, the most probable cause.

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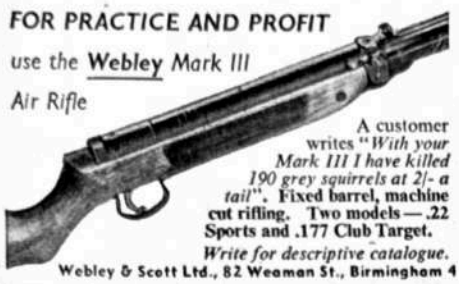

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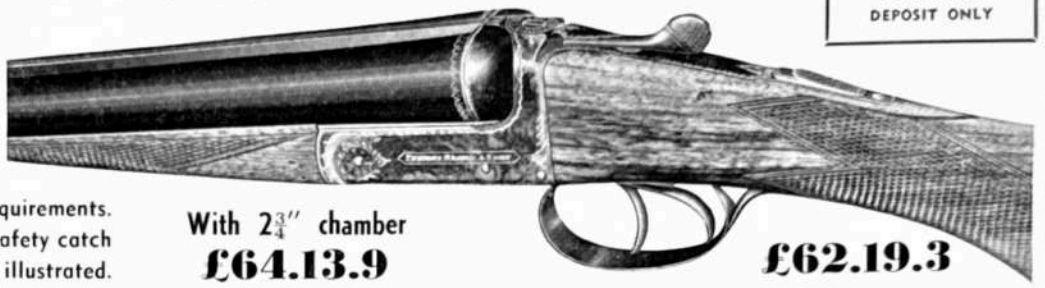

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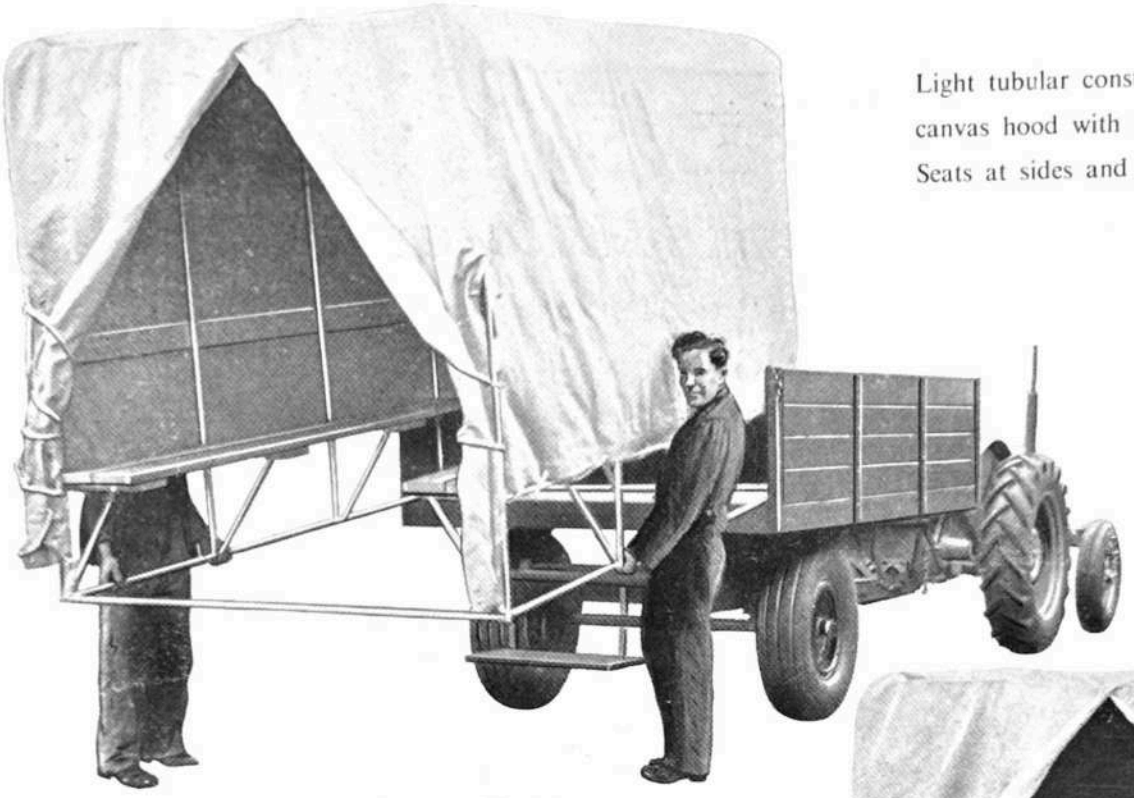

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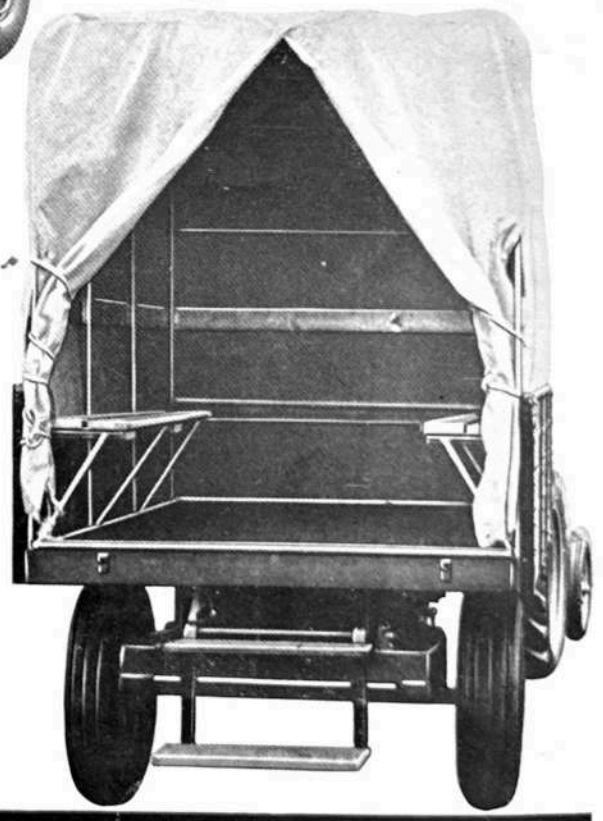

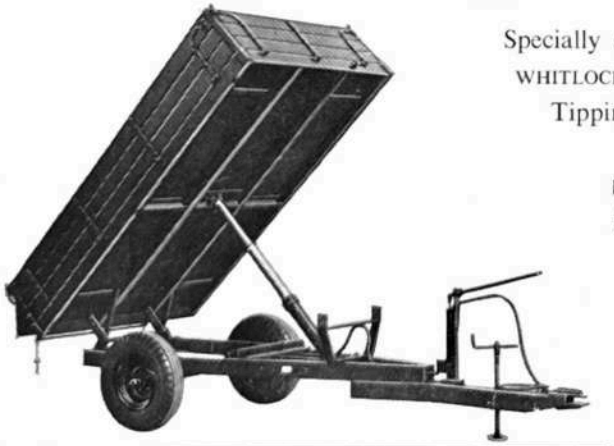

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